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A MODERN MAGDALEN

AN ORIGINAL DRAMA
IN THREE ACTS

BY
ISABEL
MONCRIEFF

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Helena Clendenen

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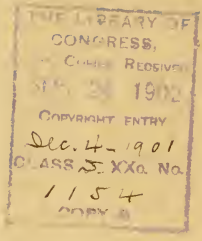

CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

Col. Roger Fairfax, U. S. V.

Capt. Cajetan Cardenas
Dick Speedwell
Texas Harding
} of the Fairfax Roughriders.

General Rivers, commanding the U. S. forces in Cuba.

Dr. Diego Otero, steward and self-appointed physician on the Juarez plantation.

Jose Quitas, overseer on the Juarez plantation.

Tonio, a Juarez possession.

Magdalen van Orsdale, an American heiress.

Lolita Juarez, cousin to Cardenas, and owner of rich Cuban estates.

Marthy Stebbins, aunt to her community.

Madge Stebbins, her adopted child.

Sarah Ann Ford, Aunt Marthy's "hélpmeet."

La Rosa, a Santiago dancer, and protegee of Lolita Juarez.

A maidservant.

Soldiers, Red Cross nurses, musicians, etc.

A MODERN MAGDALEN.

A Drama in Three Acts.

By Isabel Moncrieff.

ACT I.

At the Stebbins farm on Long Island in early June of 1898.

Scene I.—The dooryard of the old farmhouse. In the extreme left foreground stands the house. But one side is visible and is seen obliquely. Across its entire width is a covered porch which at the upper corner shows its continuance around the house. A door and window open onto the porch. The steps directly opposite the door are broad and low. From them lead two much worn footpaths, one running to the left, the other to the right in the immediate foreground.

At the left stands a large tree whose lower branches touch the porch-roof. At the extreme right is a clump of trees. One of them is circled by a broad shelf which serves as a table. In convenient proximity to this stand a rustic seat and bench.

A large tree occupies the middle foreground. Between it and the pillar in the elbow of the porch is slung a hammock.

In the background the yard slopes smoothly to the sea. There is an entrance at the left from behind the house.

It is early morning.

At the rise of the curtain Madge is discovered sitting comfortably among the pillows in the hammock—her face turned to the sea. Her sunbonnet dangles at her back. She stretches her arms and yawns.

Sarah Ann appears in the doorway, which is screened. Her gingham gown and apron are in keeping with her face and form—clean, stiff, precise. Throughout the play her costume varies only in color and pattern of goods.

Sarah Ann (in a shrill, rasping voice)—Maggie!

Madge falls quickly back among the pillows and, closing her eyes, assumes a posture of sleepful repose.

Sarah Ann, flapping her apron to clear the door of flies, comes out, closing the screen quickly.

Sarah Ann (a note of anger added)—Maggie!

Aunt Marthy (from within)—She was right on the steps jes' a teeny spell ago. I guess she haint fer off.

Sarah Ann (snappishly)—No, I guess she haint.

Aunt Marthy (still within)—Call thet *I* want 'er, Sairey Ann.

Sarah Ann (stubbornly)—Ef she can't hear one word, Sairey Ann Ford haint a-wastin' no time screechin' more. (Shooing at the flies again, she goes in.)

Aunt Marthy appears in the doorway. She is stout, hearty, red-cheeked; her hair still glossy black, her eyes bright. She pushes her glasses upon her head.

Aunt Marthy (in a despairing tone addressed within)—I dunno which tries my patience most—you er Madge. One o' ye's got to give in. It 'pears like you might begin by

namin' 'er right. Maggie she wont never answer to ef ye 'uz to call till kingdom come. (Comes out to the steps). O Madge! Ma-a-dge!

Madge (sleepily)—Is it time to get up?

Aunt Marthy coming down crosses to the rustic-bench and seats herself. She puts her glasses in place on her nose and calmly watches Madge.

Madge yawns and opening her eyes lets a bewildered glance fall on Aunt Marthy.

Madge (sitting up)—How long have I been asleep?

Aunt Marthy (patiently)—I guess ye can answer thet best yerself. Ye're 'nuff 'wake now to hear *me,* an' I hev sunthin' to say to ye.

Madge, fidgeting with her bonnet-strings, crosses to the rustic chair, slowly seating herself.

Aunt Marthy—Never sence ye 'uz a teeny baby have ye *meant* to make me trouble. Be ye goin' to mean to now? (Pause, in which Madge hangs her head, her face set.) Ye're old 'nuff now to see the right o' things, an' ye mus' see thet you an' me can't do the housework 'ith Roger here an' Magdalen a-comin'.

Madge (jerking her bonnet and savagely biting the strings)—You needn't have hired Sarah Ann Ford.

Aunt Marthy (reproachfully)—Ye know I don't want no hired *stranger* here. I know what Sairey Ann's help is, an'——

Madge (interrupting fiercely)—And *I* know what her tongue is. She can lord it over you——

Aunt Marthy (sternly)—Tut, tut. Sairey Ann Ford an' me's ben neighbors goin' on forty year—ever sence John brought me home a bride. She's five year older'n me, an' she's allus hed thet bossy way. She don't mean nothin'.

Madge (hotly)—Don't she! Well, she can't boss me, the sour old maid!

Aunt Marthy (starting and glancing apprehensively toward the house)—Tut! tut! child. Don't make things worse. Be a help to me, not a hinderance. Sairey Ann's crotchety, there hain't no denyin' it, but 'er heart's in the right place. (Madge sneers.) I dunno what I'd a-done 'ithout 'er when John an' my little Annie died. She loved Annie nigh ez much ez I did, an' I guess she don't rel'sh it 'cause you've took Annie's place.

Madge (brokenly)—That's not my fault. That doesn't excuse her. She always hated me. You know even when I was little she'd never let me inside her house. What right has she to come *here* to taunt me? She hadn't been here an' hour yesterday when she told me she'd come to be your helpmeet, but she didn't intend to help you coddle and humor and make a fine lady of a foundling-brat like me. (Sobbing passionately, she buries her face in her crumpled bonnet.)

Aunt Marthy (sternly, her face clouded)—Ye must a-done sunthin' to rile 'er; ye——

Madge (chokingly, as she uncovers her face)—She came out here when I was reading. She said my place was in the kitchen; that I am no-account like—oh! (choking and flinging her arms on the shelf and hiding her face in them.)

Aunt Marthy (rising to bend over Madge and touch her hair in a manner indicating unacquaintance with demonstration)—Sairey Ann says a heap she don't mean, the way lots o' other folks does. Mebbe she knows sunthin'

'bout yer antycedents, but I guess ef she hed a-knowed she'd a-told 'fore this. My John and my Annie both begged 'er when they was a-dyin' to tell ef she knowed. She wouldn't a-hed the heart——

Madge (throwing her head up fiercely)—Heart! She hasn't any, else she'd think of——

Sarah Ann (appearing in the doorway, and interrupting with her rasping voice)—Marthy!

Madge hurriedly straightens up, looking fiercely ahead of her.

Aunt Marthy, with a nervous start, makes great pretense of straightening and tying her apron.

Aunt Marthy (with unconscious meekness)—Yes, Sairey.

Sarah Ann—It's nigh onto 7 o'clock. Time the churnin' uz begun. I've got to go to ironin'. There's five white skirts an' a white dress an'——

Aunt Marthy (hurrying toward the house)—Yes, Sairey, yes. I'm a-comin'.

Sarah Ann, after the preliminary apron-flapping, comes quickly out. She darts an angry glance at Madge.

Sarah Ann (severely)—Marthy Jane Stebbins, be you a-goin' to do thet churnin'?

Aunt Marthy (hurriedly)—The cellar's a mite chilly, an' Madge hain't a-feelin' right peart.

Sarah Ann (advancing hurriedly to the steps and peering at Madge in exaggerated astonishment)—Massy sake! I never see 'er when she wa'n't peart.

Madge, jumping to her feet, faces Sarah Ann, her eyes burning with fiery hate.

Aunt Marthy (with nervous haste)—Sairey Ann, hain't suuthin' a-burnin'?

Sarah Ann (turning to go in, with a grin of malicious content)—Ye don't smell nothin' a-burnin' *inside* the house. (following Aunt Marthy in).

Madge, her face suffused with anger, stands with hands tightly clasped, lips parted, teeth clinched.

Madge (stamping her foot with uncontrolled rage)—Ugh!

Roger enters from L. He is in riding costume, whip in hand. Catching sight of Madge, he pulls himself up into a military attitude.

Roger (levelling the whip at Madge)—Halt! (Madge starts backward with a nervous shriek). Ah! (with relief) the danger is averted. (With a professional air) How often are you taken? (Madge starts off with an injured air.) Don't go off *now!*

Madge (witheringly)—It pleases you to be funny.

Roger (gravely)—Quite as much as it pains me to be sorry.

Madge (coming back with exaggerated concern)—You must be in pain now. You're (sneeringly) so sorry-looking. (Seating herself on the rustic bench.)

Roger—A reflection. (taking a chair and laying his hat on the shelf). Your fits of anger——

Madge (with an upward tilt of her head)—Are mine.

Roger (slowly)—Ye-e-s. And the effects are yours. If such wrath explodes daily, you can't last long. Take yesterday, for instance, and the burst was over such an old grievance, too. Today I suppose it's a new one.

Madge (gloomily)—No, an old one—Sarah Ann.

Roger (laughing)—Poor Sarah Ann!

Madge (flaring up)—Poor Sarah Ann! (catching her breath convulsively). I hate her, oh how I hate her!

With her in the house life's just unbearable. She's the last straw.

Roger (amused)—Then I earnestly hope a gust of Fate won't send her blowing out here just now.

Madge (scornfully)—You wouldn't find it so funny if you had to endure what I do from her. But I sha'nt put up with her any longer. I'm going away.

Roger (seriously)—When do you go?

Madge—Today. (Drumming decisively on the shelf.)

Roger—Where?

Madge—As far as I can get, and I'm never coming back.

Roger (twirling his whip)—Do you go alone?

Madge (eyeing him suspiciously)—You needn't think I'd hesitate or be afraid, just because I've never been off this island or farther away from home than the town where I went to school.

Roger (calmly)—You're mistaken in the thought that prompted my question. I had a romantic idea that a damsel in such distress (eyeing her closely) might know of some noble knight who would come to her rescue.

Madge (scornfully)—I guess if there were you'd be apt to know it.

Roger (lightly)—Why should I? True, I heard from you regularly during the weeks I was abroad, but much might have happened since I sailed for home. As I came here but yesterday there might be some news I haven't heard.

Madge (impatiently)—I'm just about as free here as I'd be in a cloister. You know Aunt Marthy well enough to be sure no *man* would ever come here more than once.

Roger (queerly)—No?

Madge—No. (Laughing shortly.) Oh, you—we've known you years and years. Aunt Marthy thinks you're old enough to be quite safe.

Roger (flinching, but quickly recovering himself)—But you go away occasionally. (Slowly.) Have you never met anyone whose attention you favored (watching her closely, Madge making no sign). Have you never thought of marriage as a way out of a life distasteful to you?

Madge—It would be a waste of time, wouldn't it?

Roger (leaning smilingly toward her)—So you never waste any time in that direction?

Madge (an elbow on the shelf, her chin in her hand)—Often.

Roger (straightening up gravely)—Often!

Madge (sighing)—Very often. (Lowering her voice.) Whenever (leaning confidentially toward him) I think of——

Roger (in a low tone)—Yes?

Madge—Stebbins!

Roger (flinging himself up with a laugh)—So a better name must be the first inducement to marriage. (Dreamily) How would such a name as—as—(pulling himself up sharply) oh, such as——

Madge (impatiently, as she twirls her bonnet by the strings)—You could find a better one without looking very far. (Roger eyes her with a startled air of which she is dreamily oblivious.) Yes (throwing her bonnet over her head and slowly sawing the strings over her shoulders), every step must be labelled before I take it. There are three necessary. The second must be marked M-O-N-E-Y—lots of it (throwing her arms wide).

Roger—That step leads to a whole platform. And it affords (a trifle sarcastically) a still higher step?

Madge (convincingly)—Yes. For with money to lift you, you step into happiness, peace, content.

Roger (in grave surprise)—So! (after a pause). Happiness, peace, content! Content—the last round of the ladder. There's no place for love then.

Madge (frowning)—Love! (with disgust). Love isn't a thing by which to climb. It's a pitfall.

Roger (after a long-drawn whistle)—By the shade of Sarah Ann!

Madge (flaring up)—Sarah Ann!

Roger—It seems to me I've heard Sarah make the same *deep* reflection.

Madge (hotly)—I'm not so dumb, Mr. Fairfax, that I can't have a few ideas of my own! I've seen several people in love, and they were anything but happy. Why, they actually suffered!

Roger (rising wearily, with a sigh)—Not from love.

Madge (severely)—Those who are supposed to know called it love, and each was acknowledged to be a very bad case.

Roger—It must have been. But the suffering came from distrust and jealousy, no doubt, and these are elements of passion, not of love. Love knows no jealousy nor distrust, no suspicion nor fear. Passion breeds them all. Passion destroys. Love perfects. The difference between them is as distinct as that between day and night. God alone knows why the most of us need pass through the darkness of passion to be able to recognize the purifying light of love. But only then do we learn that passion in its *best* disguise is as like unto love as the moonlight to the sunlight. Ah, Madge! life minus the knowledge of love is death. Without love ambition leads to nothing and labor is a curse. Love is the balance-wheel of the world!

Madge (half-heartedly)—I envy you the discovery.

Roger (wistfully)—And I wish you might profit by my experience, for like most far-reaching discoveries it entailed suffering. This I would spare you, Madge (leaning tenderly toward the slightly drooping figure with head bowed dejectedly)—spare you because you are to me—(controlling himself with effort)—what you always will be—(forcing a smile)—a child. You know it hard to think of suffering coming to a child.

Madge (rising with mock hauteur)—Child! Sir, you offend the dignity of seventeen summers!

Roger (bowing low)—A pardonable offense from one whose hair is turning evidence of the frosts of forty winters.

Aunt Marthy (from within)—Land alive! I've got to go myself, an' I'd like to take a gun.

Roger (astonished)—Aunt Marthy on the warpath!

Aunt Marthy appears on the porch, her sunbonnet in one hand, in the other a long-handled feather duster. Her cheeks are flaming, one showing up a generous daub of flour.

Madge (to Roger)—With feathers and paint at that!

Roger (going toward Aunt Marthy)—May I follow you on the trail? I could *carry* the gun.

Aunt Marthy (putting on her sunbonnet crookedly)—Eh? Oh! Roger! I'm mighty glad ye're back. I reckon I'll need ye. (Coming down the steps, she raises the duster; running her hand along the handle, she touches the feathers.) Land alive! I opined I hed my sunshade.

Roger—I couldn't understand why you were starting off in such high feather.

Madge (running laughingly to take the duster)—Where is the sunshade?

Aunt Marthy (testily)—In the umbreller rack, whar the duster hedn't ought to've ben. (To Roger, as Madge goes)—'Tain't any wonder I'm driv clean outen my senses. It's Eph Pelter agin.

Roger—What's Eph up to now?

Aunt Marthy (crossly)—Up to some shade tree asleep, I reckon. Sammy Green jes' brung word thet the cows air in the corn in the bottom-land.

Roger (going for his hat)—Why don't you shoot him, Aunt Marthy? Nobody would ever miss him—he's so nearly nothing.

Aunt Marthy (with utter contempt)—Nothin'! He's worse than nothin'. He's jes' the little end o' nothin' with the pith knocked out.

Madge appears with the sunshade—a big buff one, with a bright green lining.

Roger (returning slowly and twirling his hat)—It would be useless to take a gun, then, if we couldn't get at the pith of the matter.

Madge (midway of the steps)—Whither are you bound, Sir Knight?

Roger (taking the sunshade from Madge)—To the bottom land after the cows, fair maid. Coming with us?

Madge (going to the hammock)—No, thank you. It's a good mile down there.

Aunt Marthy and Roger go off L.

Aunt Marthy (calling back)—Don't fergit to pick the strawberries fer dinner!

Madge (in the hammock, unmindful in her musing)—Without love labor is a curse. (Pause.) I suppose that's the reason I don't like work. (Pause.) But I'm sure no amount of love would make me like it. (Pause.) Without love ambition leads to nothing. Ambition often leads to fame. I wonder if all famous people had to be in love? But Miss Magdalen says fame's empty. So ambition leads to nothing with or without love. (Frowns and sighs.) Well, this world's a queer place! There's something wrong somewhere, that's sure.

The galloping of horses is heard in the near distance. As the sound grows clearer there is a gradual slackening of speed, which comes to a full stop close by.

The roughriders—Dick Speedwell, Texas Harding and Cajetan Cardenas—are without. They are all in United States calvary uniform. Dick and Texas dismount.

Dick (without)—Backin' out, Cadge?

Cardenas (same)—We've struck the wrong place again, I tell you.

Texas (same)—'Tain't ef the kid steered us right.

Dick—Come off thet bone-rack, Cadge, an' give it a rest! (Cardenas dismounts.)

Madge, greatly excited, shakes out her skirts, and sets straight a hairpin or two.

Texas enters.

Texas (in a loud voice)—Ef we've barked up the wrong tree this time, devil take us!—(catching sight of Madge)—Ho-lee, whiskers (backing off precipitately into Dick).

Dick (who doesn't see Madge)—What ye dancin' the back-

step fer, Tex? (Seeing Madge, he snatches off his hat, making an awkward bow.) Judas priest! (calling) Van up here, Cadge! This is whar you kick the beam!

Cardenas (approaching and bowing gracefully)—Ah, we beat the quarters for a lion and discover—a—dear. This is not, then, the residence of Mr. Roger Fairfax?

Madge (risen, drawing herself up coolly)—No. You must have passed his place on the way. Mr. Fairfax is visiting here. This is the Stebbins place.

Cardenas (winking slyly at Dick)—A more attractive place than his own, I fancy. Miss (interrogatively) Stebbins. (Madge stiffly bows.) I regret we have no cards. Let me present you, Miss Stebbins, Mr. Speedwell and (looking around for Texas, who approaches gingerly from behind a tree) Mr. Harding. Introduced by (with another graceful bow) their comrade, Cardenas, (with assurance) You've heard of us, no doubt.

Madge (brusquely)—No. If you'll wait I'll go for Mr. Fairfax. He's off about a mile. (putting on her sunbonnet and starting away).

Cardenas—Pardon. It is too far for you to go in the hot sun. You can direct us. But first, may I trouble you for a glass of water?

Madge (indifferently)—It's no trouble. The well's just around the house. (going back).

Cardenas (with a meaning look at Dick)—I follow. (going around the house with Madge).

Texas (starting to follow, to Dick)—Single file, Speedy!

Dick (grabbing him by the arm)—With a mile or so between the van and rear, ye moon-eyed jay!

Texas (with a good-natured grin of surprise)—The devil! So we ain't in it.

Dick (ruefully)—Not by a jugful! Say, but she's a hummer! (Goes across to the rustic seat followed by Texas.)

Texas (knowingly)—Old Rodge hain't coolin' his heels grubbin' up snails.

Dick (sitting)—Not on yer bronch! An' I'll lay ye a fiver this trig little stepper's what steered him off the study o' boay-constrictors.

Texas (taking the bench)—That cogs the dice. But I'll throw ye, the boays hain't through studyin' *him*. Loleety Juarez's mate ain't here danglin' fer nothin'.

Dick (reflectively)—An' whar Cadge Cardenas is Leety's goin' to be.

Texas—Rodge hain't never goin' so far ez to git wrapped up in Leety. (grinning). He ain't pinin' fer a death hug.

Dick (gloomily)—Rodge's on to *her* habits, sure. But Cadge is smoother in the long run, an' he ain't fergittin' to count the times Rodge's smashed up some o' his games.

Texas (sighing deeply)—It beats me why Rodge 's let 'im go out o' his clutches.

Dick (interrupting heavily)—Rodge wouldn't never kill nothin' ef he could help it. But he's off his reckonin' when he don't shuffle Cadge off. Say, Tex, ef the yeller-jack er the yeller flag don't git Cadge, damme ef I wouldn't gamble he'll give Rodge the death squeeze yit.

Texas (fiercely)—Ef he does (rising) you an' me'll try the same squeeze on him. (Seeing Madge and Cardenas approaching from back)—Come out o' the vapors!

Dick (rising nonchalantly)—We're dry, Cadge. How's the well?

Cardenas (looking at Madge)—Cool, sparkling, refreshing.

Madge crosses to the rustic bench, followed by Cardenas.

Dick (drily, as Cardenas passes him)—Intoxicatin'.

Cardenas (smiling)—A hit! (Louder)—Say, pards, I don't feel equal to that mile. I'll trust you to round up Fairfax (taking the rustic seat and smiling at Madge) in the cornfield, (laughing).

Dick (lightly)—Yep. I reckon we can manage 'im without the coil, eh, Tex? (bowing to Madge). Directions, Miss Stebbins.

Madge (graciously)—From the well you'll see the orchard. (A short reflective pause.) Go the length of it. Take the lane to the right, down that to the woods. Follow the wagon-track and it'll lead you to the field.

Dick—Thanks.

Madge—You'll probably meet Mr. Fairfax.

Dick (bowing, then aside to Texas)—We've got to stir our stumps lively. The deer hain't onto the boay's tricks. (They go off behind the house.)

Cardenas (with a sinister smile, calling)—Say, boys, explain to Fairfax that this time it's a case of the miss being better than the mile. (To Madge)—Pardon my little joke, but Fairfax will appreciate the pleasantry. So, my friend Fairfax has never told you of his adventurous days on the plains?

Madge (with shining eyes)—No. He rarely ever talks of himself. If you hadn't come I should never have known him for the hero he is.

Cardenas (complacently, while concealing from Madge a wry smile)—I've sketched him faithfully—as his friends and comrades know him. We hope to see him a hero of world-wide fame before this war with Spain is ended.

Madge (rapturously)—If all you've told me is known at headquarters, I don't wonder it was easy to get him a colonel's commission.

Cardenas (shrugging his shoulders lightly)—The head men know Fairfax.

Madge (damped by a sudden thought)—Maybe he won't take it.

Cardenas—If he should refuse (smiling familiarly at Madge) we'll get you to ask him.

Madge (surprised)—Me!

Cardenas (with soft insolence)—You must have great influence with him.

Madge (laughing lightly)—Mercy, no!

Cardenas (confidently)—You want him to be colonel.

Madge (emphatically, but absently)—Sure. Then I can work you a banner—"The Fairfax Roughriders." Pretty, isn't it?

Cardenas (gallantly)—It will be prettier when your fair hands have finished it. You'll come to camp and present it in person, won't you?

Madge (longingly)—Oh, if I only might!

Cardenas—Why not?

Madge (discontentedly)—I'm not allowed to go anywhere. I should never have had a single glimpse of a soldier if you hadn't come.

Cardenas (amused)—What's the matter with Fairfax?

Madge (poutingly)—He won't appear in his regimentals here.

Cardenas (with soothing certainty)—But you're going up to the city to see him off.

Madge (shaking her head in deep dejection)—No. (More miserably.) And I'd just set my heart on doing that.

Cardenas (with concern)—Do they know how badly you want to go?

Madge (in an abused tone)—That doesn't make any difference.

Cardenas (apparently in sympathy)—It's a beastly shame they're so strict with you. But———

Madge (taking fire)—They've no business to be. Some day I'll show them!

Cardenas (in a righteous tone, while looking down to hide a sinister smile)—But really, I can't blame them.

Madge (mimicking Cardenas)—No, oh, no. Of course not! (Scornful laugh.)

Cardenas (chuckling in secret enjoyment)—I suppose (leaning back) they don't allow you (languidly watching her through half-closed lids) a—a—looking-glass. (Madge starts back, regarding him in mute astonishment.) If they did you could see for yourself why they guard you so closely.

Madge (gasping with confusion)—You—you—don't mean—

Cardenas (leaning gracefully forward with a genial smile)—But I do mean it. (Again fixing half-closed eyes on her face.) And Fairfax (with apparent amusement) a connoisseur in feminine beauty, never once whispered it to you. Why (with ardor), you'd take New York by storm! Sancta Maria (slapping his knee), I'd like you to try it. (Madge, intensely moved, leans unconsciously forward, drawn as a bird to a serpent.) Don't you know anyone in the city?

Madge (with effort)—No.

Cardenas (assuring a boyish enthusiasm)—Well, I do. I've a cousin there now—Lolita Juarez. Ever heard Fairfax speak of her?

Madge (dreamily)—No.

Cardenas (with a sardonic smile)—No? I am surprised. Well, I'll get her to ask you up.

Madge (aroused)—But—

Cardenas (as if vowing to himself)—And we'll see that you go. (An indistinct murmur of voices is heard.) Now (rising), not a word to anybody yet. Promise!

Madge (breathlessly)—I promise.

Cardenas (hurriedly)—I'll write.

Madge (going toward the house)—No, oh, no!

Cardenas chuckles softly.

Roger, Dick and Texas enter at back.

Dick (laughing)—Swab yer sponge over thet, old boy! Madge (to Cardenas as she carelessly swings her bonnet)—I told you they'd meet him.

Roger (coolly, after a sharp look at Madge, without offering his hand)—Howdy, Cardenas! Still fond of planning surprises.

Cardenas (looking after Madge, who slowly goes toward the house)—And of carrying them out.

Roger—Miss Stebbins! (Madge turns and stops.) Your aunt stopped at a neighbor's. She sent word that you shouldn't forget to pick the strawberries. (Madge goes slowly into the house.) You (to Cardenas, whose eyes follow Madge) are (quietly and with double meaning) after me.

Cardenas (with a suave smile)—And your follower is rewarded by finding not only you but another—

Roger (cooly)—And a rarer gem.

Cardenas (pointedly, but still suavely)—So rare—that she vanishes—*slowly*—when you appear. When did you add alchemy to the list of your attainments?

Roger (cooly)—Can't you remember? I think about the time I met you. Your magic power seems to be on the increase, doesn't it? when it brings you to me in your present capacity?

Cardenas (still suavely)—As bearer of a colonel's commission. Why not?

Roger (with a short laugh)—When you come to enroll yourself under my banner, alchemy must have been at work, indeed.

Cardenas (easily)—Yes. It's an acknowledged fact that love will work wonders, and in love for my country I'm willing to forget any past differences between us.

Roger (contemptuously, regarding Cardenas steadily)—Kind of you. But why weren't you made colonel instead of captain? With your zeal and your intimate knowledge of Cuba, you might make a better leader than a follower.

Cardenas (pleasantly earnest)—No. I can better aid my country by securing for her service a leader to whose military efficiency West Point can testify, and for whose unfailing bravery I can vouch. (with assumed humility).

Texas (grinning)—That ain't no lie!

Dick (with a snort of surprise)—Good fer you, Cadge! (To Roger.) Don't fergit he's only trumpeter fer yer friends and comrades.

Cardenas (presenting the credentials)—Will you accept the commission? (bending his head).

Roger (slowly, with a steady gaze on Cardenas)—As from my friends and comrades, yes. And I heartily thank them for the honor shown me.

Cardenas bows.

Dick and Texas—Three cheers fer the Fairfax Roughriders! Hip, hip, hurrah!

Cardenas (with a significant smile)—We hope to make the name of Fairfax immortal. (moving off). See you in camp—

Madge appears in the doorway, seen by Cardenas only. He covertly acknowledges her presence.

Roger—Day after tomorrow. (giving his hands to Dick and Texas).

Cardenas goes off R. with a smile to Madge, who waves farewell and disappears.

Texas—It's a dead shot we'll be winners under you, Rodge.

Dick—And we'll tramp to glory under your lead, Colonel Bronchbuster.

Roger (with tender gravity)—I hope I'll lead you safely home. Well, good-by, pards! Sorry you can't stay longer. (They all move off R. together.)

Dick—We don't hanker after leg-bail, but (with military stiffness) duty calls—so—(going off)

They sing without

From "The Roughriders" :*

The Roughriders—Music by Arturo Buzzi-Peccia. Words by Helena Clendenen. Published by John Church Co.

We'll hie, hie, hie for the ranks, nor shrink when the bugle sounds.
We'll hie, then hie, hie for the camping-grounds.
Then—how gladly we shall greet the day when orders come to go,
How proudly we shall march away to meet the waiting foe,
(The curtain begins to fall slowly.)
And on we'll bear Old Glory high thro' raining shot and shell,
Spurred by one aim—to serve our country well!
The horses gallop away.
CURTAIN.

ACT I.

Scene II—The day following. The sitting-room of the farmhouse.

On the left side, in the immediate foreground, a wide fireplace, its mouth filled with ferns growing in a green-painted box. On the mantelboard, exactly in the center, a large glass bell covering a design in wax flowers. On each side, primly placed, candles in an antique lustre of wrought iron. Over the mantel an engraving in a gilt frame hung with cord and tassel.

Between the fireplace and a door a few feet beyond, an old caken settle which serves also for a wood-box.

The door, excepting the frame at top, is concealed by ugly red canton flannel curtains hanging from a pole. Behind them, fastened to the door, is a canvas presenting General Washington in his regimentals.

A few feet beyond this door is another, in use. Between the doors a haircloth chair is placed stiffly against the wall.

In the left corner of the room stands an old clock, its face distinctly visible.

In the back wall, left of center, a large bay-window with a bench running the entire length of the curve. From this bench it is easy to step onto the terrace on a level with it. The windows are curtained in white Swiss. Through the windows is a view of treeless yard and a wide sweep of sea.

At right of the bay is a round covered table with a haircloth chair each side of it, all flat against the wall. On the table, with other books, a small Bible. Over the table a large lookingglass, it's length equaling the width of the mantelboard space. In front of the table a tall hassock covered with worsted work.

In the right wall, near the corner is a door. Another, wide, in the foreground, opens into the hall.

Between these doors, against the wall, is a large haircloth sofa with gingham-covered pillows primly placed. A tall hassock covered with worsted work is in front of it.

In each of the available wall spaces is hung with cord and tassel a good-sized steel engraving in a gilt frame.

It is just past sunset, and the windows are red in the afterglow.

Magdalen and Madge enter door at L. Magdalen carrying a book containing as a bookmark a stiletto with a

beautifully wrought heft which shows in full above the book's edge.

Madge—No, Miss Magdalen, there isn't a single room changed. (Magdalen looks critically about.) This is a shade better than the parlor, but if it isn't all funereal I don't know what you'd call it.

Magdalen (smiling)—Things do look rather mournful. I wish Aunt Marthy wouldn't allow her furniture and walls to be so taken up with each other. It's an injury to both.

Madge—Sarah Ann's house is just the same, isn't it?

Magdalen—Yes. You know I've been there many summers, and nothing is ever changed. I've often wondered how they manage after cleaning to find the exact place for everything.

Madge (dryly)—Perhaps they chalk the locations.

Magdalen (laughing)—Thank you.

Madge—Can you wonder that I dread winter and live outdoors all summer?

Magdalen—This room isn't so bad, Madge. That window-space lightens its misery, and the fireplace helps tone up things in winter, doesn't it?

Madge—If you look straight into the fire and dream.

Magdalen (disinterestedly)—Poor dear (going to lay her book on the mantelboard)!

Madge—I used to live in hope that time might work changes, but there's no time here for them.

Roger enters at upper R. door.

Roger—There shouldn't be any time in here for anything. You're losing the beauty of a perfect evening.

Magdalen—We'll appreciate it the more by contrast, Roger. We're just finishing a colorless tour of inspection. I don't find a thing changed and I've been away two years.

Roger—I should think you'd appreciate unchangeableness as an attractive quality. It's so rare nowadays.

Magdalen—Unchanging ugliness is unpardonable. There isn't a thing here to indicate the beautiful in Aunt Marthy's nature. On every side dullness and severity—(attracted by the red curtains)—no! can it be true, or do I dream that that grim front has lost its wooden eye?

Madge—By accident. No, those curtains are no dream.

Roger—And it took a hundred years to effect this change. Made, too, through the move of a dead member. After a century of suspense Washington got on the tenderhooks and came down hard for a change. He dislocated his frame, and (drawing aside the curtains) he's stretched out here for repairs.

Magdalen—How irreverent—in a colonel, too!

Roger—That's so (saluting)! Beg your pardon, General!

Madge (in an amused tone)—Great idea of Aunt Marthy's stretching the canvas in here.

Magdalen—Yes. A real artistic effect might be had out of it.

Roger (drawing the curtain to)—Oh, well! Any sort of curtain may lend both dignity and mystery to an exhibition.

Sarah Ann (without)—Maggie!

Madge draws in her breath, and her eyes snap with fury.

Roger laughs.

Sarah Ann (with closer shrillness)—Maggie! I shan't call ye agin!

Madge—Glad to hear it.

Magdalen (smoothly, as she goes toward the sofa)—You might at least answer, Madge.

Madge—But I won't. It's bad enough to have Maggie hurled at you, let alone being shrieked at all over the house in that vulgar fashion.

Roger—'Tis sort of rough on you. But don't you think if you went quietly and ignored the attempts to enrage you, you'd be the gainer?

Madge (sullenly, as she goes to the window)—You can't ignore a—a—vixen.

Roger (to Magdalen, as he goes to the table and picks up a book at random)—I've tried to convince Madge that she loses *much* (with a dry smile) in losing her temper (humorously regarding the apparently inattentive figure), and that the only way to balk Sarah Ann is through self-control.

Madge (pointedly, without turning)—People without tempers don't know anything about self-control.

Roger (good humoredly)—Truly. So it takes a woman to understand it.

Magdalen (somewhat absently, a glance of disdain fixed upon Madge)—By the way, Roger—

Madge (interrupting with a laugh)—Oh, do come, look at Aunt Marthy. She does look so funny. (Magdalen frowns, and an exclamation of annoyance escapes her.) Yes (nodding) I'm coming. (On her way to door at L.) *Colonel* Fairfax, are you going to church with Aunt Marthy tonight?

Roger—I am.

Madge (at the door)—Then I'll go ahead to tell them if the preacher isn't there they can call on you. (Goes out.)

Magdalen (with disgust)—Aunt Marthy has spoiled her completely. She's becoming too insolent to tolerate.

Roger (quietly)—She didn't intend insolence. You do not understand her. (Magdalen's lip curls.) I think your presence here will do her good. (laying respectful hands on one of the chairs near the table and addressing the wall). With your permission, for just five minutes. (bringing the chair down).

Magdalen (laughing)—Maybe the chair won't stand for the separation.

Roger—Isn't it quite stable? (sitting cautiously, after a short test of its strength). I'm not looking for any hairbreadth escapes (sitting comfortably). All right. To return to Madge. (Magdalen's face darkens.) She will profit by your companionship. You'll be here all summer, won't you?

Magdalen (surprised)—Why, no! I wrote you— Oh! my last letter didn't reach you. I gave up traveling for the same reason you did—in the hope of being of some use to my country. I shall join the Red Cross workers.

Roger (with friendly admiration)—That's like you, Magdalen. It's stupid of me not to have guessed it, when I know so well what your work has been for the last fifteen years. Will you go to Cuba?

Magdalen—I shall be in Cuba perhaps as soon as you will.

Roger—So there's a possibility of our meeting there. I'm glad we needn't say farewell, then. I confess I dread

the parting with Aunt Marthy, dear soul!—and with Madge (with a retrospective smile) But Madge doesn't realize the full meaning of the war. She looks at its poetic side only.

Magdalen (coldly)—She's old enough to begin to take a hold on realities.

Roger—A knowledge of the practical isn't gaged by any set number of years, is it? Besides, who ever wants the years to bring a time when reality refuses to show up a poetic side? Don't you still enjoy revelling in a maze of myth and fancy?

Magdalen (with a slightly constrained smile)—I'm not too old, am I?

Roger (laughingly)—I score my point. If you were, I shouldn't dare confess I've great faith in the mystical. Here (taking a scarf-pin from beneath the lapel of his coat) is a proof of it. Will you handle it reverently? (handing it to her.

Magdalen (laughing)—I'll try to. (examining it). How bizarre it is!

Roger—Yes. I got it in the Orient, along with an affidavit that it belonged to—to—(with mock seriousness) —Mohammed. He wore it, I believe, to—to—fasten his—chest-protector. The stone possesses superhuman power. If the owner ever goes knowingly into danger and loans it—the stone, not the danger—to a friend going the same way—it—the stone—will insure safety to both. (Magdalen looks up with a questioning smile. Yes; I loan it to you.

Magdalen (radiant)—What an honor! (Roger laughs.) But, if I should lose it!

Roger (in a sepulchral tone)—Then we are in the finder's power, be he friend or foe.

Magdalen (affecting a shudder)—I begin to shrink from the responsibility. I wish I might give you something to insure *your safety*, anyway. But I've nothing. (rising with a sudden thought). I'm not so sure. (going to the book left on the mantelboard, and taking out the dagger). Here —(crossing to meet Roger)—better than your pin, and far more suited to the purpose, this. (handing it to him). I'm sorry it isn't charmed, but it's a dear treasure. I got it on the Rialto of Shylock, who was back on a vacation.

Roger—That ought to insure me a pound of flesh, anyway.

Magdalen—Let us hope army service won't put you in the need of it. I shall not see you tomorrow (moving away), so it's au revoir in Cuba.

Roger (going to open the door at L.)—I hope so. Then keep a brave heart, my daughter, for we part under the protection of Mohammed.

Madge appears on the terrace at the open window as Roger bends over Magdalen's hand, on which he presses a slightly lingering kiss.

Magdalen leans toward Roger in an attitude full of devotion, struggling against repression.

Madge's expression reveals the awakening of a passion surprised. She disappears as the door closes behind Magdalen.

Aunt Marthy enters the upper R. door, advancing to the table. She has been a witness of the parting.

Aunt Marthy (as Roger turns from the door)—I thought Madge was in here.

Roger—No; do you want her?

Aunt Marthy—Mebbe you can help me. (stopping at the chair removed by Roger, he laughingly hastens to replace it). I come in (seating herself at L. of table) fer the Bible. Sairey Ann's ben a-disputin' with me. I want to find the place whar the "wages of sin"—(the Bible in her hands)—

Roger (taking the book from her)—You can't find any such place here, Aunt Marthy. You're in a province governed by peace and—love. Let's talk about that.

Aunt Marthy (sighing in pleased anticipation)—Well, Roger, I see it a-comin' (Roger is surprised), an' yit I'm kind a-took back, fer I thought ez mebbe goin' to war would keep ye from namin' it to 'er.

Roger—I haven't spoken to her.

Aunt Marthy—Ye hain't!

Roger—No; for I am not sure she loves me. If she does she isn't yet aware of it. (smiling).

Aunt Marthy (dryly)—She's hed *severeal* years to find it out in.

Roger (a trifle absently)—I've written her—

Aunt Marthy (amazed)—Written! Land alive! Ef you've turned thet big a coward, how 're ye ever goin' to face the guns o' war!

Roger—The letter is for you to keep (running the dagger down the open Bible), to be given to her only in the event of my death. It will explain why my entire property is willed to her. Should I return (closing the book with the dagger in it), no pen shall tell her the joyous message so long treasured in my heart. (laying the book on the table). Aunt Marthy, do you think there's any hope for me?

Aunt Marthy—She's the only one thet can set ye right on thet, Roger, boy. But she ought to favor ye. She knows ez well ez I do what ye be. An' she'd make the proper mate fer ye.

Roger (gratefully)—I was sure of you, Aunt Marthy, quite sure. (laying his hand on hers lying on the table). I wish I were as sure of her (Aunt Marthy smiles), and she were as sure of herself, of her own heart, dear winsome Madge!

Aunt Marthy (starting)—Eh?

Roger (slightly dazed)—Well?

Aunt Marthy (gasping)—Madge! Madge Stebbins (Roger bows, still bewildered) Roger! Roger Fairfax! (Roger gives her a military salute). There's no fool like an old fool!

Roger (politely)—I'm sorry if you were—

Aunt Marthy—An' here I've kept Madge shut up fer—

Roger—For me? I hope so.

Aunt Marthy—Roger Fairfax!

Roger (saluting)—Here!

Aunt Marthy—You dunno an' I dunno who her parents was.

Roger—Where ignorance is bliss—

Aunt Marthy—There ain't no fool bigger'n a man!

Roger—Not a minute ago you said there was no fool—

Aunt Marthy—Bigger'n you. When there's women of birth, women of eddication, women of yer own age, women (pausing for want of breath)—

Roger (smiling)—I want but one.

Aunt Marthy (sharply)—They're all in one right under yer nose—an' you go an' want Madge. I calkilated *you* was smart 'nuff to remember thet beauty's only skin deep.

But ye hain't. Ye're like all the rest o' yer kind—beauty first, an' beauty last, an' ye never look further ef beauty'll hev ye. (chokingly). Thet wouldn't be so bad—but—Madge—Madge—It's 'nuff to make yer parents turn in their graves!

Roger (gravely)—Twenty years my own master—

Aunt Marthy (sharply)—Ought to've made ye a better one. (breaking down). Roger! No! No! It mustn't be. (burying her face in her hands). I can't hev it so!

The sound of churchbells comes from a distance.

Roger (uneasily)—Maybe a little whjle in church will put a new light on the matter. Besides—(Madge enters L. door, leaving it open). Come! (bending kindly toward her) Do not let me go from you with a heart so heavy.

Madge (icily)—If you're going to church, you'd better be starting.

Aunt Marthy (rising and hastily drying her eyes)—Ef *you* hain't a-goin' *you'd* better go up an' stay with Magdalen an' learn to pattern after her. (goes out L. door).

Roger—Shall I see you when I come from church?

Madge (coldly indifferent)—I'm sure I can't say.

Roger—You'll be up in the morning to see me off?

Madge (colder, if possible)—If I'm not too sleepy. You'd better say good-by now.

Roger (taking the extended hand)—You'll write me?

Madge—Most likely. (not looking at him). Good-by and good luck to you.

Roger (deeply pained)—I thank you for your good wishes. I (with quiet emphasis) shall remember them often. Good-by! (Madge is oblivious of the love and longing in his eyes as he turns sadly away. He goes off lower R. door.)

Madge (as the door closes, holding her hand disdainfully in front of her)—*You* didn't get kissed! It's too bad *you* couldn't have helped me begin to pattern after Magdalen. She (going to the sofa and sitting) loves him—Roger. I can't pattern after her (chokingly). She's so calm, so cool—and that's what he likes. (despondently). Love knows no distrust, no jealousy, no fear. Magdalen's too cold to know, so she loves him. He understands her. He loves her. He could never understand how I—I—hate—hate—her. (burying her face in the pillows and sobbing).

Cardenas appears at the open window, comes through and goes softly to the sofa.

Cardenas (bending over Madge)—Senorita mia!

Madge (starting up)—You!

Cardenas—Forgive me! Your sobbing brought me through the window. I cannot tell you how great is my distress to find you in tears.

Madge (with dignity)—My tears of anger need'nt distress you.

Cardenas (sitting beside her and laying his hat on the hassock)—Ah! but they do. And they fill my heart with fierce anger against the cause. (smiling sarcastically). Not Fairfax, I hope. (Madge does not turn.) He was being taken to task for something as he left the house with a lady—your mother?

Madge—My mother is—I have neither father nor mother. I live with my aunt. It was she whom you saw with Mr. —Colonel Fairfax.

Cardenas—She will return soon?

Madge—Not very. She's gone to church.

Cardenas (with a satisfied smile)—How disappointing!

Madge (turning quickly)—You wish to see *her!*

Cardenas—It seems so. I bring a letter (searching for it) addressed to Mrs. Stebbins—your mother, I supposed. It is from my cousin—Lolita Juarez—(pulling out several letters)—of whom I spoke yesterday. I told her of you when I got back to New York, and the letter is the result. Ah! (finding it) as it is an open one, you may as well read it.

Cardenas watches her furtively as she reads.

Madge (with delight)—Oh! do you know what she asks?

Cardenas (nodding pleasantly)—That your aunt will let you visit her soon.

Madge (excitedly)—Now, right away!

Cardenas (with a surprised air)—No!

Madge—Listen! (looking for the place). Where is it? (reading) "If, my dear madam, you will favor me in this matter, will you let your daughter come up tomorrow with Colonel Fairfax—a very esteemed friend of mine, who will recommend me to you." (looking up). Tomorrow

Cardenas—That's fine! Lita wants to give you the chance of seeing a few more soldiers.

Madge (her face suddenly clouded)—Oh! I wish she'd have written! I know I can't go!

Cardenas (soothingly)—With Fairfax to plead for you, I'm sure your aunt won't refuse.

Madge (frowningly)—He'll not plead for me.

Cardenas (raising his eyebrows)—Not so!

Madge (reflecting darkly)—And even if he did, it would do no good.

Cardenas (rising and looking at his watch)—Well, it's too bad all round. Lita will be as much disappointed as I am.

Madge (slowly and without lifting her head)—You must go now?

Cardenas—If I catch the next boat. Believe me, my eyes and my heart are both begging me to stay—now more than ever since I cannot look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

Madge (her attitude unchanged)—You couldn't come again tomorrow?

Cardenas (bending eagerly forward)—Ah, senorita, you wish it! (drawing himself up reluctantly, but decisively). But no! my heart cannot lead me. I go to camp tomorrow. (with a sudden thought). You are not thinking—(pause)—

Madge (with slow decision)—That if you could come, I'd let you take me to your cousin.

Cardenas (regretfully)—Ah! (pausing) If (uncertainty) I—wired Lita to be at the pier with a carriage, why couldn't you go tonight?

Madge (uncertainly, with a quick glance upward)—I don't see why I couldn't. I've some money of my own. The boat leaves?

Cardenas—There's one at 8:30. If you have decided to go—

Madge (firmly)—I've decided (rising and flinging the letter on the sofa). I'm going. It won't take me long to get ready. But how will you amuse yourself?

Cardenas (with a significant smile)—By thinking of you.

Madge (ignoring the reply)—The room is bare of entertainment. But there's one thing that may interest you—a good painting of Washington. It was given by the artist

to my aunt's grandfather. I think you will find it worth inspection (going off R.). It's behind those curtains. I of Mexico. (picking up the letter). This will be just as R. door).

Cardenas (throwing himself back on the sofa with huge enjoyment)—Easier than I thought. You can't have all the beauties, Fairfax. This goes to even up that little affair across the border. And when you find your snow-white bird is flown (with a laugh of keen relish), you'll be hit some harder than I was when you lost me the pearl of Mexico. (picking up the letter). This will be just as comfortable (putting it in his pocket) there. (looking contemptuously around). Bare! Huh! 'Twould look better entirely so. Washington must be a masterpiece. (rising and going toward the curtains). I'll leave you (mimicking Madge) in good company with—the General.

As the curtains are flung contemptuously aside, Roger is revealed.

Cardenas (falling back with a grasp)—Fairfax!

Roger (calmly stepping forth)—Not general yet, only the colonel. A very lifelike portrait, no? (cooly surveying him). It is sort of rough on you (going toward the table and out of range of the lookingglass) to expect to look on a man so great and see—

Cardenas (in a position so his image is fully reflected in the glass, looking up)—A coward.

Roger—Even a room so bare affords you (with a bow and a wave toward the glass) a mirror.

Cardenas (as a dagger flashes from hs sleeve into his hand)—Which shall never again reflect your face!

Roger (cooly, and as if at random picking up the Bible from the table)—No?

Cardenas—No. This time, my friend, Cardenas comes off victor. (dandling the instrument). Better drop your book. I remember you fight well free-handed, amigo mio.

Roger (calmly running his thumb across the leaf-edges)—The Bible's a pretty good book to have along with you in face of (a slight pause) danger.

Cardenas (with an ugly leer)—Of death. I regret that the odds are so much on my side.

Roger (calmly)—The odds on your's may go to the devil, when the Lord's on my side.

Cardenas (with insolent admiration)—I never admired you so much before, Rodgie. I'll grant you a moment to find a line or two suitable for the situation. (falling back a little, folding his arms, and holding against his sleeve the dagger which he regards caressingly).

Roger (fixing a steady glance on his adversary)—If you were more familiar with the Bible, you might some time be able to profit by its good goints. I think I can open directly to a shining example. The place is marked by (the heft firmly in his hand, and dropping the book) a dagger. On gaurd!

Cardenas rushes on Roger. They fight desperately. Roger, however, rather parrying the thrusts than giving any.

Roger, finally gaining advantage, dexterously wounds Cardenas in the fighting hand, hurling the dagger to the floor.

Cardenas falls in a cowardly attitude.

Roger (cooly picking up the fallen dagger and placing it in his hand beside his own)—Huh! Shylock, you *are*

great in winning interest. Double the principal in less than an hour (looking down at Cardenas, who has raised himself on one hand). Can't you get up now, Cardenas? Your position isn't graceful, and Miss Stebbins might come in any moment (as he goes to lay the daggers on the mantelboard, Cardenas rises and staggers into a chair near the table). It's too bad she aroused your memory of the pretty Mexican to make you forget your love for your country and its need of my services. It's my belief you can't deprive it of them, Cardenas. It's to my belief, too, you owe your life. I'd have got rid of you long ago, you know, if I hadn't looked on you as a helpless instrument of Fate. This is the reason, too, I've no fear of you. If it's decreed that I'm to meet my death through you, what's the use of being afraid? And if it isn't so decreed, there's no need of fear. From past experiences with you, I've great faith that it isn't so decreed, so don't try any further to "*make the name of Fairfax immortal.*" It will save you trouble. (On his way to the sofa.) Devote your energies to your country. (stopping). You see Fate is in love with me. I met one of my tenants who told me the same—ahem!—soldier who was looking for me yesterday had returned today. So (again starting for the sofa) I came back expressly to see you. (stopping again and pointing to the curtained doorway). That door leads into my apartments. (going to the hassock for Cardenas's hat). Washington always was a genius at holding the key to the situation. He had it as usual. I used it to open up the shortest way to the scene of action (going toward Cardenas, and handing over the hat). The shortest way out for you is that. (pointing to the window).

Cardenas (fully recovered, with an ugly laugh)—And leads to jailing for an attempt on your life.

Roger—I've never before troubled myself to put you out of business, have I? Now, when my country calls for what defense I can give, I can't afford to stay at home to answer for defending myself. As I told you before, I've no fear of you. Now, go!

Cardenas (going out with insolent ease)—Adios! (with a mocking bow, his eyes fixed on the ceiling, his hat raised high).

Roger—Thanks. When I do go that way, it's good-by to you forever. (Cardenas disappears.) I wonder—(pausing in silent reflection, as he walks to the window recess, and looks out into the twilight)—

Madge enters lower R. door. She is in traveling attire, hat in hand.

Madge (nervously, closing the door)—Was I very long?

Roger (turning quietly)—Quite long enough.

Madge—You!

Roger—Do I make a poor substitute for Cardenas?

Madge (angrily)—Where is he? And why are you here?

Roger—Well—I'm here, because—he has been, and he—isn't here—because I am. Where he is isn't a question of importance so long as you aren't traveling the same road.

Madge (flaring up)—If it's a road I wish to travel, what right have you to interfere?

Roger—The right of knowledge to prevail against ignorance, if nothing more.

Madge (furiously, going toward the table)—I'm not so

learned as you, of course, but I'm old enough to know my own mind. (slamming down her hat).

Roger (quietly)—It's often quite as desirable to know something of other minds. I happen to understand the language of a mind like Cardenas's. It's foreign to you, so I came back to offer myself as interpreter. From appearances Cardenas has asked you to go some place with him.

Madge (coming down, with a sarcastic laugh)—You're mistaken. His cousin did the asking. (defiantly). His cousin, Miss Juarez.

Roger—Ah, I see! But the invitation came through Cardenas. The translation of it into literal English is: Will you accompany me down to—well—not down—to Jacksonville.

Madge (bewildered)—Jacksonville! (Going to the sofa.) She wrote from New York. (On her knees, searching under the pillows and beneath the sofa.) I left the letter here.

Roger (with a wry face)—Cardenas perhaps remembered that I'm familiar with his handwriting. (Madge looks up, her face revealing the dawn of truth.) Miss Juarez has hardly had time to get to New York. She honored me yesterday with a greeting from Jacksonville. (Seeing the truth in its full horror, Madge crouches against the sofa, covering her face.) Don't Madge, don't take it so to heart! I understand it all, and you know it is safe with me.

Madge, staggering to her feet, sways forward, Roger catching her.

Madge (hoarsely, as she pushes him away with all her strength)—Don't touch me! I—you—you hate me!

Roger (deeply pained)—Hate you! When I came back to protect you! (Madge laughs hysterically.) Hate you! When I am thanking God that I came in time!

Madge (covering her eyes in agony)—Ah, God!—(with a sneering laugh).

Roger (his hand tenderly caressing the bowed head)—When I am thanking God that I alone know.

Madge (wrenching herself away from him)—And because you know (her face set) to my dying day I shall hate you!

CURTAIN.

Act II.

ACT II.

In the mountains of Cuba. Early July.

Scene I—On the Juarez plantation. The court of a magnificent old house, Moorish in architecture.

Around the pillars of the arcade and far up on the walls climbing roses run rampant. Beneath the arcade the walk is flagged with stone, the greensward extending but a foot or two from the pillars, when the flagging begins again, extending over the entire court.

In the central background is a fountain with water playing over the sculptured centerpiece. Around the fountain is a stone bench. It is lower than the coping, which forms a back for the seat.

Near the fountain's edge to the left is a movable flag covering a dungeon.

In the corners of the court and at right and left in the foreground—all within the arcade—are quaint benches of stone.

Near the seat at the left, in the foreground, just at the edge of the arcade, is a pretty lacquered table and a house chair. On the table is a tray with glasses and a carafe of wine.

On the seat are a mandolin and a guitar, and over one end of it a silk shawl trails to the floor.

In each of the three walls beneath the arcade is a door between two narrow windows screened with ornamental grating.

In each wall of the upper story is a window, the iron grating of which is in the form of an oriole.

It is twilight.

Cardenas enters R. door. He is in regimental dress. After a sweeping glance about he looks up to the window in the background.

Cardenas (calling)—Lita! (After a short pause)—Lita! (Pelting the closed blinds with a rose which he has unfeelingly wrenched from a vine.)

The windows are drawn slowly open.

Lolita appears, kneeling on the window bench. She is in picturesque evening costume, not lacking mantilla and fan.

Lolita (smiling languidly down)—Present, capitan!

Cardenas (gustily, after an appreciative glance)—Hola! Hurry down and let's have a look at you.

Lolita (her languor untempered)—I hasten, señor capitan. (She slowly disappears, and the windows are as slowly pushed to.)

Cardenas (after opening C. door and peering a few seconds up and down the passageway)—Hola, there, boy! Has Doctor Otero been here?

Boyish Voice—No, señor.

Cardenas—Conduct him here when he comes.

Boyish Voice—Yes, señor.

Cardenas (going toward fountain)—So, the good (sneeringly) doctor's not here yet. (Ruminating, his foot on the bench, his back to L. door.) Well, Diego Otero, I'm beginning to distrust you. (shaking his head convincingly). I must use you to-night, but this mission fulfilled will, I'm pretty sure, end (with a sardonic grin) your life mission. If you're found dead (with fiendish triumph), but you won't be *found* dead. The mountains and our little secret cavern will never tell what they hold. (chuckling). The Lord is now *decidedly* on my side, Colonel Roger. Else why did he station a Spanish camp so close to our hidden cave? And why did he have an underground passage connect that cave with the old wine-cellars here? (Lolita noiselessly enters the L. door and slides into a graceful position on the stone bench near.) I'll bet (shaking with suppressed laughter) if I——(Lita sweeps her fingers lightly over the guitar strings).

Lolita (with smiling slowness)—Not another chill, Tano?

Cardenas (doffing his hat, after a short pause indicative of surprise)—Only slight. But I don't want another. That's why I'm here after Otero. But (gallantly, after a critical survey of Lolita) I hardly think I'll need him after seeing you. You'd send the blood coursing through the veins of a mummy.

Lolita (laughing softly)—My costume pleases you?

Cardenas (approaching)—Some, since I'd begun to think I'd never again see you in anything but those devilish Red Cross gowns. Say, if your poor, sick soldiers could see you now they'd think——

Lolita (demurely, toying with her fan)—Would they?

Cardenas—No, by gad! they wouldn't. They'd lose their brains.

Lolita (watching him through half-veiled eyes)—I rejoice in your safety.

Cardenas—Yes, custom's hardened me. (reflectively). I think, Lita mia, you'd best keep out of Fairfax's sight when gowned a la Red Cross.

Lolita (amused)—You don't rate my natural attractions very high.

Cardenas—If others have natural attractions as fair. (sitting in the chair).

Lolita (somewhat reflectively)—I like competition.

Cardenas (with a retrospective smile)—If you could see your rival! Your running——

Lolita (nonchalantly)—Wouldn't be very exciting if I should start handicapped.

Cardenas—Don't be too certain. Her style of beauty——

Lolita (with curling lip)—Isn't much.

Cardenas (surprised)—You've seen her?

Lolita—Why not?

Cardenas—Where?

Lolita—Where did you see her?

Cardenas (rising, with assumed indifference)—In the States.

Lolita—In the States only? (Cardenas nods.) Well, I go you several better. I saw her in Tampa, introduced myself in Santiago (Cardenas with difficulty suppresses his astonishment) and have often (yawning behind her fan) talked with her—here.

Cardenas (at C., his eyes glittering)—Here! Impossible! (Aside)—Madge Stebbins here!

Lolita (nonchalantly)—The Red Cross League may make more than one thing possible, and a woman so much in love with Roger Fairfax as she is wouldn't lose any time in embracing—the possibilities.

Cardenas—It can't be the same. (Lita lifts her eyebrows.) Why haven't I seen her?

Lolita—She's on the sick list.

Cardenas—Her name?

Lolita (with triumphant enjoyment)—You never told me. And I never asked. She's No. 17 of the hospital corps. To *me* her only mark of distinction is that odd pin of Roger's.

Cardenas (somewhat absently)—A strong point in her favor.

Lolita (coolly)—It might be used to scratch her off the list.

Cardenas (roused from reflection)—Well, my good wishes go with you. But I fear you'll never become Mrs. Roger Fairfax, even though you do seem to be making a good running in your present role of Lady Bountiful. (Greatly amused.) How much longer do you think your wine-cellar and larder will stand the strain?

Lolita (calmly)—They'll answer to my demands as long as there's gold to make them speak.

Cardenas (grinning)—I ran across Speedy out here tending to the loading of a couple of mules. Are the supplies intended for distribution in your hospital camp here, for the camp down the mountain, or for the special tent of Colonel Fairfax? By the way (with open curiosity), has he ever come up to thank you in person?

Lolita looks ahead, eyes and lips touched with a dreamy smile.

Otero enters C. door, closing it behind him.

Lolita (turning with languorous grace)—Just in time, Doctor. My cousin is burning up with (pause) fever (rising), and has just had a chill. (To Cardenas, as she goes off L.)—Come again to-morrow, Tano. I hope you may have entirely recovered. (To Otero)—I leave him to your tender mercies, Doctor.

Cardenas—One moment, Lita! Let no one but a messenger be admitted to the court.

Lolita—Until?

Cardenas—Until I say it is free.

Lolita (laughing and curtesying)—Yes, my lord!

Cardenas (going to the bench)—I'm out of medicine, Otero.

Lolita goes out L., closing the door.

Otero (following Cardenas, his face dark)—So am I—entirely out of the gold cure. (Cardenas's eyes alone betray distaste for the turn the conversation has taken.) I'm here to tell you I'm getting tired of this——

Cardenas (interrupting with easy evasion)—You *have* had a long siege, Diego mio. Three months up here, isn't it, without a glimpse of civilization? But (smiling) I should think your double role would have helped vary the monotony.

Otero (grimly)—No.

Cardenas (laughing)—The part of steward to Señorita Juarez isn't so easy as you thought.

Otero—No. She's brought me to account for the smallest

detail. One wouldn't expect to find so much business in a woman's head.

Cardenas (somewhat contemptuously)—Women do sometimes inherit a man's capacities. Lita is her father's daughter. I fancied, Otero (in a lower tone), you'd enjoy better playing the good little doctor to her poor, sick insurgents. (chuckling).

Otero (darkly)—Cursed dogs of rebels! Yes (with a sardonic smile), I helped ten shuffle off this mortal coil yesterday.

Cardenas (affecting a sigh)—Well, you saved their bodies from being riddled by Spanish bullets.

Otero—Better. I've saved Spain considerable ammunition. (gloomily). If she never needed it before, she'll need it now, since these damned Americans have swaggered into the fray. My friend, I fear the game goes against us.

Cardenas (with a sarcastic smile)—You're easily frightened, little Doctor. Don't lose your wits because a jackass brays. Besides the game isn't worth the ammunition if the tricks are all ours.

Otero (sitting)—These American devils have spoiled one of our surest leads. Here they are quartered not a mile away on your estates, forcing the Spaniards back from the hills and giving the rebels the chance of turning your cousin's plantation into a real stronghold for the insurgents. It's a trap no longer. Besides, the coming of the American troops has brought your cousin. That loses us an important trick. She trumps with the Red Cross, and it's the devil's own. Its doctors and nurses are here, there, everywhere. I haven't had a single chance to try my medical skill on an American.

Cardenas (with a reflective smile)—Lita has rather spoiled your rushing business in crossbones and skulls.

Otero—She commands the situation.

Cardenas (chuckling)—In our favor. Can't you see how completely we are protected by her loyalty to the Cuban cause?

Otero (still darkly)—If the blind holds. But (with a sinister smile) this has nothing to do with——

Cardenas (interrupting quickly)—With the business in hand. You are right. I sent for you to tell you that I got wind of a new order to-day. The time of our advance on the Spanish is changed.

Otero—Why?

Cardenas—To wait for re-enforcements. The Eighth is on the way, how close I don't know. Now, word must be got into the Spanish camp to-night that they must attack us to-morrow; that their approach must be made on our north flank; that they must retreat, and that the retreat——

Otero (with satisfaction)—Ah!

Cardenas—Must begin near the mouth of the gorge.

Otero (with a long-drawn breath)—Good! But can the American dupes all be trapped——

Cardenas (interrupting somewhat impatiently)—Before arrival of aid? That's the plan. The Eighth will take up camp a mile south of here. The Fairfax Roughriders, remember, will be pushing the retreat a mile north.

Otero—Very good. I take the word to-night, and will be met at the end of the underground passage as usual (smoothly) by a Spaniard whose hands are empty of the gold promised.

Cardenas—Part of the gold will be handed you.

Otero—Only part.

Cardenas (with a shrug)—The rest after the battle tomorrow.

Otero (with a deprecating wave of the hand)—Still tomorrow. (smoothly). Did you acquire the habit of trust in the United States?

Cardenas (soothingly)—We need'nt push the matter. We hold the winning cards.

Otero (repeating)—We hold the winning cards, (rising and moving off toward R.). Well, you don't play your hand well in this deal, amigo mio. (at the door). I think I'll see what I can do with a lone hand or two. (goes off R., closing the door after him).

Cardenas (between his teeth)—You'll never find out more than you've stumbled on to. To-night——

Maidservant (without, after knocking)—Señor Ca——

Cardenas—Well! Come in!

Maidservant (entering)—A messenger——

Cardenas (sharply)—Let him in! (Servant goes.)

Tonio, a native darky of about twelve years, enters, going directly to Cardenas, whose face is indistinct in the fast-gathering darkness.

Cardenas (irritably)—In the devil's name, what do you want, you imp!

Tonio (scratching his head)—Colonel——

Cardenas (after a short pause)—Well!

Tonio—They said the Roughrider Colonel was here.

Cardenas—Where did you come from?

Tonio—From outside. (Cardenas lays a rough hand on him.) I—(with chattering teeth)—I—belong here.

Cardenas—On the plantation? (Tonio nods.) Can't you say yes sir?

Tonio (gasping)—Yes, sir.

Cardenas—You've brought a message from——

Tonio—Are you the Colonel?

Cardenas (shaking him)—Don't question me! I'm the man for your news.

Tonio (trembling, yet approaching Cardenas for a better inspection of his coat)—You haven't got on a Colonel's coat.

Cardenas (throwing out an angry arm, which Tonio with a quick movement escapes)—Damn you! Did I say I am the Colonel? The Colonel's in camp. You can't go there unless your news is worth listening to. The Colonel's not coming here, and if he were he wouldn't waste any time on you.

Tonio (backing farther away, and trembling more violently)—They said the Colonel would be here in the house. I'll wait.

Cardenas (after a short scrutiny of the boy, affecting a laugh of hearty good humor)—Well, you are a gritty one! Too bad you aren't big enough to be a soldier.

Tonio (reassured, coming eagerly forward)—Oh, señor, I'd like to be one.

Cardenas (reflectively)—I'd like to see what kind of a soldier you'd make. (Tonio straightens up unconsciously.) I've got it! (clapping his hands gleefully). I'm going to see just what sort of stuff you're made of. Now (stepping back a little), you're a soldier and I'm your general. Salute! (Himself giving the salute, which Tonio instantly copies.) Right about face! (Tonio suiting the action to

the word.) Right about face! Sit down in that chair. (indicating the one near the table which Tonio is facing, in which Tonio seats himself). Head up! Shoulders back! (Tonio quickly responds.) Good! Private, you have a message for one of my colonels. Give it to me!

Tonio (uncertainly, but bravely)—I can't, general.

Cardenas (after a short pause, during which he stands stroking his chin, his elbow resting in the palm of his left hand)—Then I must punish you. What's his name—the overseer here—

Tonio (still erect, with frightened eyes and trembling voice)—Quitas.

Cardenas (studying the ground)—If you're the right sort of soldier you can stand—(a pause, during which Tonio trembles violently)—no, not a whipping. Let's see! (looking reflectively over his hand at his trembling victim). In very bad cases this—Quitas—uses the—dungeon, I'm told.

Tonio (rising and trembling from head to foot)—Not that, señor.

Cardenas (turning with decision)—Yes; in there you'll find your tongue the sooner. (going toward the dungeon covering).

Tonio (his voice shrill with fear)—I won't wait, señor!

Cardenas (in a wheedling tone)—Oh, yes! It's a nice place to wait—so cool and dark. (kneeling by the slab).

Tonio (more shrilly)—Señor!

Cardenas (taking out a pistol and covering the boy with it)—Take care! Cry out and you're a dead nigger. Come! (Tonio stands rooted to the spot.) And when you come out again remember to say that Quitas put you in for punishment. Come! (pushing back the slab with little difficulty and raising the iron door it conceals). Hurry up! (leveling the pistol at the boy, at which Tonio starts mechanically forward and after a few steps falls to the floor in a faint.) Good! (reaching to take him by the collar and drag the body across a corner of the opening till the legs hang over, then dropping it). Huh! (as a splash is heard) a little water (laughing) will help revive him if waking doesn't kill him. (closing the door and slipping back the stone). Then (still kneeling) if you make a howl, nigger (rising and turning to the fountain, the sight of which induces an uproarious laugh), you (pointing to the fountain), you, our oracular fountain, you'll be the cause of it, of course, (sitting on the fountain-bench). Guess you'll keep, nigger, till about midnight, then I'll try again for your news. Whatever it is Fairfax doesn't get it. Well, Colonel (clasping his hands about his knees and leaning back), West Point's all right on tactics, but I don't fancy she's up on strategies. The trick's mine to-morrow, and the trap's yours, and if I can help it your bones shall never know another burying ground. (rising and stretching himself, after a reflective pause). Well, I'd better be looking up Jose Quitas. (Goes off R.)

The moon rising high over the court floods it with light.

After a few moments Lolita and Otero enter C.

Lolita (in an incredulous tone)—You swear it?

Otero—I swear it.

Lolita (going slowly to the fountain)—But why should Cajetan wish to be rid of him?

Otero—Can you think of no reason?

Lolita (impatiently)—None. As far as I know my cousin has always admired Colonel Fairfax—admired him greatly.

Otero (with a sarcastic laugh)—So! Perhaps until he heard some things the Colonel said to me of you. (Lita's fingers tighten on her fan, and her fully arrested attention is not lost on Otero.) Your work, your goodness, your generosity—without other charm—(with a convincing laugh)—I know, señorita, that Colonel Fairfax adores you.

Lolita (laughing lightly)—But that Cajetan should be jealous!

Otero (shrugging his shoulders)—Perhaps not. You should remember you have become more precious to him since the Spanish destroyed his property. If Colonel Fairfax is fortunate enough to win you, señorita, he must gain, too, your property, no?

Lolita—Ah!

Otero—To Cardenas, your——

Lolita (with a searching look)—Why have you told me this?

Otero (earnestly)—I owe it to you, señorita. You have always dealt honorably by me. You are in—Colonel Fairfax loves you. You are interested in him. Your cousin now hates him.

Lolita (deeply meditative)—So he and Colonel Fairfax fight on my account to-morrow?

Otero—Yes.

Lolita—Down near the gorge?

Otero (concealing a smile)—Yes.

Lolita (her face dark)—And Cajetan will practice a little treachery.

Otera (suppressing a laugh)—Enough to be sure he'll kill the Colonel.

Lolita—Since you tell me this you are prepared to help me.

Otero—Yes. Colonel Fairfax comes tonight?

Lolita—Yes.

Otero (taking a case from his pocket)—Here! (taking a small vial from the case). If you give him wine—and this—*he*—will not fight tomorrow.

Lolita—All of it?

Maidservant (entering C. door, announcing)—Colonel Fairfax.

Roger enters C. Servant goes.

Lolita turns with a start and a nervous laugh.

Otero (calmly handing the bottle to her)—Half of that in a glass of wine.

Roger (coming forward)—That sounds ominous, Doctor. (taking Lita's extended hand). The senorita isn't in danger of fever, I hope. Her hand is hot and dry.

Otero (smiling at Lita)—The danger will be past to-morrow, Colonel.

Roger—I'm glad of that for her sake and my own. If Senorita Juarez should fall ill, Doctor, my men would all desert camp and haunt the court of their Lady Bountiful.

Lolita (laughing and looking at Otero)—Believe me, I'll stand by their colonel better than that.

Roger (as Otero moves off)—Not going now, Doctor? (Lolita hurriedly puts the bottle in her bosom). Aren't you going to stay for the dance?

Otero (shaking his head)—I must go now. I may get back before the dance is finished.

Lolita (kindly)—We'll look for you. (Otero goes off C.) Do you realize (reproachfully, as they come forward) that you've been here quite a week? (pausing).

Roger (smiling)—Yes. And that camp duties bar me from doing the social up in style. My misfortune (bowing), not my fault. (looking admiringly about). I always thought you good at description, but (shaking his head slowly)—

Lolita—Don't things come up to my description of them?

Roger—From what I've seen your descriptions were mild. This court is idyllic (going closer to the fountain). The oracular fountain, I suppose.

Lolita (laughing and sitting on the bench, directly facing the audience)—Yes.

Roger—It looks peaceful and angelic enough now.

Lolita—Tradition has it that the most terrible warnings have issued from it at just such times.

Roger (moving back)—Aren't you afraid to be so close? My flesh creeps. How's my hair? Does it speak quite distinctly? The fountain, I mean.

Lolita (laughingly)—It speaketh not. Its warning is a wail or a moan.

Roger (sitting beside her)—And you say it means—

Lolita (oracularly)—Disaster to all who hear it.

Roger—By the beard of the prophet! And I'd been hoping there'd be an exhibition for my special benefit. When were you last favored?

Lolita—Two years ago. Just before two of the house servants were killed by lightning. I was away in the States. (nervously). Oh! (moving nearer to Roger) What was that?

Roger—I heard nothing. (Lolita shudders.) You've been so much among the sick that you're oppressed with nervous fancies. You must—

Lolita (in great distress)—There it is again! (rising in affright, one arm almost about Roger's neck as she leans on his shoulder) There! Oh! (sinking down and hiding her face against Roger's arm) Don't you hear it?

Roger (listening)—No. Nor did you (gently raising her face) hear any warning my dear girl. See here! (turning so as to face her squarely and increase the distance between them). If the fountain produces the noise you describe there's good cause for it, and I'd like nothing better than a chance to investigate it.

Lolita (shuddering)—I don't want you ever to have the chance. (laughing nervously). I'm giving you a poor welcome—on your first visit, too. It's fortunate La Rosa is still here. Perhaps she may be more successful in entertaining you. (with sorrowful reflection) I wonder if you would ever have come if she hadn't been here.

Roger (smiling)—La Rosa's been here, hasn't she, ever since the invasion of Santiago was begun? How fortunate she is in having you for a friend?

Lolita (meaningly)—She realizes and appreciates it. Odd, isn't it?

Roger—Odd!

Lolita—Yes. *She* didn't seek my friendship. I offered it. (mournfully). You sought my regard. I gave and still give it, and to you (looking ahead with sad eyes) it is valueless.

Roger—In what way have I shown that I so hold it?

Lolita (with a catch in her voice)—In avoiding me.

Roger (with a quiet smile)—Tonight?

Lolita—Tonight you are here at my bidding. (dropping her head pathetically). There was a time when you didn't wait for that. (raising her head despairingly). What have you've been here quite a week (pausing)?

wait for that (raising her head despairingly). What have I done that you should be so changed?

Roger (deprecatingly)—I assure you—

Lolita (with a reminiscent expression)—In appearance you are the same man of three years ago—a man known to his friends to be above fear and above reproach.

Roger (quietly)—And the appearance is deceiving?

Lolita (turning passionately)—Not so, I pray, but that your actions are; that they were true in those days in Mexico when you taught me my first lesson in love—

Roger (moving back distressed)—Lita!

Without, mandolins and guitars play softly from "The Intermezzo."

Lolita (softly, dreamily, with eyes fixed straight ahead)—When I learned to listen hourly for your footsteps that I knew better than the beating of my own heart; when I found that day was bright only with the light from your eyes; that night was endurable only when its coming had been ushered in with the music of your voice—

Roger (rising in great distress)—Lita!

Lolita—Then—when it was clear to me that life meant love, and you had given me life (brokenly), your mission ended there (sitting upright, with calmer voice, her face illumined with a higher light) and mine—began—to prove to you the life you gave should be a blessing, not a curse, to you. And you shall have one proof—tomorrow. (rising she totters forward).

Roger (supporting her and taking her hand)—Lita! Come! You are beside yourself with fever.

Lolita (clinging to him as she straightens herself)—No, no (with a wild laugh)! Not while I can still hold my own! (putting her hands to her head) Ah! It is all so—forgive me! (going toward the table). Forget that I've said! I—(putting her hand to her throat)—I—(sinking down into the chair)—my throat—is—parched!

Roger (at her side)—You must take at once the medicine Otero left. (reaching for a glass).

Lolita (faintly, her face for a moment only revealing her consternation)—I—must have—dropped the—

Roger (going toward the fountain)—I'll look.

Lolita (snatching the vial from her dress, her face dark with revengeful purpose)—Red Cross (hissingly) 17 still ahead! But wait (stealthily watching Roger, as she hurriedly pours part of the contents of the bottle into a glass) Magdalen Van Orsdale! (with a sardonic smile) I'll score tomorrow! Oh! (pretending to take the bottle from her bosom, as Roger, stopping in his search, looks up) I—I remember now. I have it. (lifting the carafe and filling the glass with a shaking hand). Oh! (as Roger reaches the table) I've got it too full.

Roger (taking the vial from her trembling fingers)—No matter. Half of this in a glass of wine, I believe he said.

Lolita (sinking back wearily)—Yes.

Roger (after measuring it out and filling up the glass)—I hope this may have immediate effect. (handing her the mixture).

Lolita (with a faint smile, pointing to the other filled glass)—Let us drink to it!

Roger (lifting the glass)—Your health!

Lolita (raising hers)—The same for you and success with it!

The prophetic moan is distinctly heard, and at this moment Otero appears in C. door. He starts fearfully forward.

Roger is motionless and keenly attentive.

Lolita stands frozen until the sound dies away, then the glass falls from her hand and the crash arouses her.

Lolita (falling on her knees and clasping Roger's hand) —Ah! (piteously) You heard. Disaster will come—

Otero (leaning against a pillar, his face clouded with superstitious fear, his voice awe-stricken)—to us all.

Roger (with conviction, as he helps Lolita to her feet) —It's a human voice, and the sound may come again.

Lolita (putting her hands over her ears)—It shall not be heard. Otero! Music! La Rosa!

Roger (as Otero goes off C.)—Lita, if you were only calmer! You're foolish to let this go on. I wish I could convince you you're the victim of a trick.

Lolita (taking the chair, and anxiously watching the door)—No. You'll see.

Four mulato boys in native costume enter C. with mandolins and guitars. Two take the bench in R. corner, two sit cross-legged on the floor in front of them.

Otero, entering at L., stands beside the table.

Roger (to Lita)—If you'll pardon my interest in the fountain, now that the doctor has returned, I'd like (smiling) to make a closer acquaintance with it.

Lolita (shuddering, as Roger goes)—You'd best not.

La Rosa enters C.

Roger seats himself on the fountain-bench somewhat back at L. side.

Lolita (smilingly)—We're impatient, Rosa.

La Rosa bows smilingly in answer and the dance begins. During the first part of it, nurses in Red Cross habits come to linger in C. doorway a few moments in passing. At the finish, as La Rosa moves into the background, her foot catching on the displaced dungeon-covering, she falls.

Lolita (starting up)—Oh!

Otero starts forward, but stops as Roger is instantly at the dancer's side.

Roger (helping her to her feet)—I hope you're not badly hurt. (La Rosa, shaking her head and laughing confusedly, hurries out after throwing a kiss to Lita.) A loose flag (attempting to replace it with his foot) answers for—

Lolita (going forward)—The dungeon-cover (falling back toward Otero, as the moan is again distinctly heard).

Roger—Dungeon! (with the triumph of conviction in his face) So (looking toward the fountain) we'll be favored with an introduction to the body of your voice. (kneeling to push back the slab and raise the door).

Tonio (piteously)—Senorita.

Lolita (starting forward)—Tonio!

Roger (peering in)—A child's voice!

Tonio—Senorita! (moaning).

Otero (also drawn to the opening)—It is Tonio.

Lolita (bending over the opening)—Tonio, are you hurt? Can you walk?

Roger—He is moving. How can we reach him?

Lolita (to one of the colored boys who huddle in a frightened group—Pedro! My shawl, there! (pointing to the bench at L.) The rest of you, go! (They obey.) Go!

(to Pedro who brings the shawl in great haste and hurries out C.) Can you hold to my shawl?

Roger (taking the shawl and lowering it)—Will it reach?

Lolita—Easily.

Roger—Here, my boy, if you can hold to this till we can reach you. (a short pause). There! He has it. Here, Otero, take hold and pull! (Otero takes the shawl, and Roger leans over the opening in a position to take the boy the moment he is within reach).

Otero (as the boy's head appears)—He slips.

Roger, reaching the boy in time, Tonio, his strength gone, is laid on the floor.

Roger (supporting the child's head)—Poor little lad!

Lolita (kneeling beside the child)—Tonio, speak! (her voice full of gentleness and pity). Tell me how this happened.

Tonio (feebly)—Quitas. (Lolita draws in her breath sharply.) Senorita—(trying to raise his head).

Lolita—Is here beside you, Tonio.

Cardenas appears in the window L. of C. door, and is seen by Otero only.

Tonio (sinking slightly)—Tell—Rough—rider—Colonel—

Roger (raising his again)—Here, Tonio.

Tonio (with fever sh effort)—Way—underground—secret—way—

Cardenas and Otero exchange tense glances.

Lolita—He raves.

Tonio (with another effort)—Secret—way—leads—to—(pause).

Roger (tensely)—To what, Tonio?

Tonio (trying to sit up, his eyes wild)—Spy! Spy! He is—he is—(sitting up and gazing fixedly at Roger).

Roger—Yes, Tonio.

Tonio (with maniacal cleverness)—I'll wait—for—(slipping back)—the—Colonel (sinking into Roger's arms and laughing with wild glee).

Cardenas, with a smile of triumph, disappears.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

Scene II—In camp of the Fairfax Roughriders. Two days after battle.

The interior of Colonel Fairfax's tent, a full view of which is had through a spacious opening.

In the left background a cot.

In the left foreground a table with a camp-stool on each side of it.

At the right, midway of the canvas and close against it, a low oblong chest of plain wood.

In the back canvas, to the right, broad flaps are folded back, making a good-sized entrance. Through it is had a view of towering purple peaks and a near glimpse of small tents in a setting of tropical verdure. In the distance also are soldiers scattered here and there, some passing to and fro, others lolling on the ground in groups.

At the right of the tent in the foreground a clump of trees.

At the left in the foreground low shrubs.

It is broad day.

At the rise of the curtain Roger and Dick are discovered, the former seated on the stool near C., the latter on that near the canvas. The uniforms of both show the wear and tear of the recent battle.

Roger's left arm is bandaged and rests in a sling.

Dick has a limp.

Roger (wearily)—Yes, Dick, it might all have been very different if we could have learned something from Tonio.

Dick (sympathetically)—An' ye couldn't worry nothin' out o' 'im?

Roger (abstractedly)—Nothing. Not even in his wildest raving. Lay he given a clue.

Dick—An' ye hain't found no underground way?

Roger (slowly shaking his head)—No: we haven't discovered any secret passage. The boy probably meant the dungeon.

Dick (grimly)—But Tony wan't ratty when he was a-ramblin' on about the spy. An (with dogged conviction) be God! it must a-been that same damned reptyle thet chugged 'im in the hole.

Roger (languidly)—Quitas declares he put the boy there for running away from his work. It seems to be the common resort in severe cases.

Dick (grinning sarcastically)—An' this was a devilish severe one. But Tony wa'n't put in thar by none o' the hired hands, not by a damned sight. You don't swallow it ither, pard—Colonel.

Roger (sadly)—What I may believe, Dick, doesn't furnish me with proofs to fix upon the traitor. And Tonio's proofs were needed most two days ago.

Dick—Even ef ye hed a-nabbed the traitor—blast his crooked windpipe!—we'd a-hed to fight all the samee when the dirty Spanish devils made a dead set at us. But when they trap us agin mebbe they'll count on a dark horse. Say, but them niggers did finish 'em!

Roger (bowing his head on his hand)—If the Eighth had been twenty minutes later—I shouldn't have got out with even a handful of men. Dick—Dick—I led those brave fellows to their death—(with a strong effort at self control) —and I—I—am spared. (covering his eyes with a trembling hand).

Dick (chokingly)—Say, pard! (rising and walking off to R., (gulping hard). Stab me in the gizzard for a tenderfoot! (gulping) I ain't game here.

Roger (nursing his wounded arm)—Dick, this bullet-hole should have been plugged up. It's letting all my courage out. I'll have to draw on you and Tex for another supply.

Dick (dryly)—Tex! huh! (coming back and reseating himself) The leg-puller an' pill-boy's got a tap on his'n.

Roger (smiling)—Tex'll weather it in spite of the doctors. (with sudden gravity). This morning he was pretty much upset because I intend going through with this investigating business. (with a frown). How did he find out a suspect would be brought before us today?

Dick—I'll bet Cadge Cardenas told 'im.

Roger (scowling)—Does Tex know the person?

Dick (grimly)—Mebbe an' mebbe not. Say, Colonel (nervously), ef thet bullet hain't a-blasted all yer nerve, ye've got to git another grip on yer tight-ropes.

Roger—What now, Dick! Well (unconsciously straightening himself), out with your bad news! I think I can survive the blow.

Dick (gruffly)—Don't gamble on it! It's a thunderbolt. (looking down and nervously tapping the stool). It—I—Judas priest. (rising and mopping his brow with his sleeve) You—(coming forward)—I—(looking off into the distance at R.). Say! (with relief mingled with strong distaste) Say—no—ree—ty Lo—lee—ty—our Lady Bountiful's—(with a sneer)—a-glidin' this way.

Roger (with a humorous glance in the direction indicated by Dick)—So you're still unwon by all the Senorita's goodness! (Dick gives a little snort.) Well, Dick, you surely can't deny the grace of her glide.

Dick (irritated and turning back into the tent)—It 'ud be more graceful goin' the other way.

Roger (smiling)—You must own you owe her a breathing-spell.

Dick (shrugging his shoulders)—Yep. But I'll gamble *you're* in fer it, anyway. When thev kerrv their heads like thet (indicating with a jerk of his head the direction of Lolita's approach), they mean business. (going toward back). An' I (with a sigh) hain't any anecdote to kill 'er sting. (going off C.).

Roger (turning)—One moment, Dick. (following him to the door).

Lolita appears. She is not gowned a la Red Cross, and has no head covering other than a parasol.

Lolita (stopping near the clump of trees, in a listening attitude, her face revealing both fear and hope)—If Quitas is with Roger, all is lost.

Roger (facing round as Dick goes)—Bring me word as soon as possible. (coming forward).

Lolita (sauntering languidly into Roger's view)—I'm heartily glad you're on duty again, Colonel. But (with tender anxiety, as she crosses slowly to L.) are you (closing her parasol) strong enough for it? For today's painful work?

Roger—I've the strength of impatience. I want to get to the end of this business. Will you be seated? (motioning to the stool at L.) To see the traitorous face of one of my own men (Lita smiles unperceived by Roger as he walks forward to throw a searching glance toward R. entrance) will cause me not so much suffering as the suspense.

Lolita (toying abstractedly with the lace of her parasol)—I'm not so sure. I hope not. I supposed you knew—

Roger (going back to the table)—I don't even know the suspect's name, nor anything concerning the arrest. I shall probably hear all details in a very few minutes when General Rivers arrives.

Lolita (laying her parasol on the table)—I left the General at the house. He asked me to tell you he'd be delayed ten or fifteen minutes.

Roger (sitting)—Is there something I can do for you?

Lolita (apparently distressed)—I wish you could! (pouttingly)! It's anything but pleasant for me to be dragged

Roger—Quitas! (with a slight frown) He seems to have into this affair.

Roger (surprised)—In what way?

Lolita—I don't know, unless it's by way of Jose Quitas.

Roger—Quitas (with a slight frown)! He seems to have a faculty for getting people into unpleasant places. How has he plunged you into this affair?

Lolita (with a vexed laugh)—By offering himself as principal witness against the suspect.

Roger—Ah!

Lolita—I suppose the General wants me to swear to Jose's veracity.

Roger (emerging from a deep study)—So Quitas has been looking for a reward.

Lolita (impatiently)—Even if the reward should prove to be rightfully his, I shouldn't allow him to receive it. The bringing to justice of a traitor to his country should be satisfaction enough. (deeply earnest). I hope Jose has made no mistake.

Roger—Jose probably knows in a case like this he must furnish incontestable proofs.

Lolita (looking straight ahead, and assuming a dreamy expression)—Jose no doubt has them.

Dick (appearing in door at back)—Message (saluting) for Colonel Fairfax.

Roger goes instantly to Dick, who hands him a paper, and both step outside the tent.

Lolita (with a smile of enjoyment)—And what proofs Jose hasn't, I can furnish him. Ah! Magdalen van Orsdale, what wouldn't you give to have found this little pin! Roger's pin! It certainly will scratch you off the list, Magdalen, dear—you with your frank, innocent face and (sneeringly) your silvery voice that so singles you out, even to my overseer. Poor Magdalen! (sarcastically) When you plot treason in dark hours and lonely places, you should leave your voice and Roger's pin at home. Since you didn't, and Fate still is with me, I can now supply Jose with an incontestable proof. (going leisurely forward to stealthily scan the approach at R.).

Quitas enters noiselessly. He is a mulatto of small stature and thin. Craft and cunning show in every line of his wrinkled face. His eyes are small and beady. His ear-lobes sport large hoop earrings. He is in the native garb of an upper servant. As he appears within view of Lita alone, she imperiously motions him back, her eyes glittering. Jose, stealthily retreating, takes position back of the clump of trees.

Roger (re-entering)—I'll answer in person.

Lolita (relaxing in triumph)—Ah! (sauntering back). You're not called away now?

Roger (taking his hat from the table)—Yes, I'll not be gone more than five minutes. (Goes off back.)

Lolita, hastening forward, eagerly searches the approach at R. Not seeing Jose, she gives a low, peculiar whistle. Jose, coming from his place of concealment, she meets him just without the tent. Jose, removing his hat and holding it in front of him with both hands.

Lolita—Well! (with cold dignity). Your orders were to come to the house.

Quitas (his deferential attitude tinged with cowardice)—I went to the house, senorita. Maria told me you had just left.

Lolita (freezingly)—You saw General Rivers?

Quitas—No, senorita.

Lolita (facing the servant with less coldness)—Then he doesn't know yet that you haven't the proof required?

Quitas (dejected, his head down, one hand fumbling nervously with his hat)—No, senorita. No better proof than my eyes, my ears, my word.

Lolita (laughing with soft scorn)—Your eyes weren't good enough to distinguish either of the pair of plotters you overheard. Your ears only can swear that there was a woman and a man. Your word—you can repeat word for word the woman's speech?

Quitas (nodding emphatically)—Yes, senorita. And when I repeat it before the woman——

Lolita—She may not give a sign. What will your word amount to then? (Quitas hangs his head.) And the General will be very angry.

Quitas (apprehensively)—But I am under your protection, senorita.

Lolita (with a scornful smile)—Yes. I, too, have thought of that. After you brought me your story I did not go directly to the General. I went first to the place of meeting to see if I might not find some clew. You wouldn't shine as a detective, Jose. I found——

Quitas (looking up eagerly and clutching his hat tightly)—Senorita—senorita (with a half gasp)——

Lolita—Found what alone could save you from the General's wrath. In return (looking reflectively ahead as Jose stands, his head bent low, his hat pressed tightly to him) all you do to repay me is (with intense emphasis) to remember that I have no part in the affair. Here is the proof *you* found, (handing Jose the pin).

Quitas (with humblest deference)—The proof I found; yes, senorita.

Lolita (hurriedly, as the tread of feet and the distant murmur of voices are heard)—Remember! Back! till the General comes! (Going to the stool, while Jose takes his position just outside the tent.)

General Rivers enters at back, accompanied by Roger. Rivers is soldierly, tall, portly, stern. Hair and mustache gray. He carries a small package of papers in his hand.

Dick reappears to take position at L. side of entrance, facing out.

Rivers (in a crisp, businesslike tone, the moment of appearance)—Came not a half hour ago. The reward you offered is fine bait.

Roger—If it catches the right fish. (throwing his hat on the cot).

Lolita (standing)—You'll not detain me long, General?

Rivers (with a slight bow, as he places his hat and papers on the table)—I hope not.

Lolita (as Rivers looks about for another seat)—The chest will serve me, General. (walking across to it and seating herself).

Rivers and Roger take the stools, the former that at L., the latter lifting the opposite one into position at back of table, facing the audience.

Quitas, assuming a bold front, appears in view of the tent occupants, taking position in the R. foreground, not concealing Lolita. Neither Rivers nor Roger acknowledges his presence.

Rivers (grimly, to Roger)—This last bait-snapper says he

has evidence that might incriminate himself—will convict—and promises to hand me over the traitor to-day. I sent him word we would deal lightly with him if he assisted us in securing the traitor.

Roger (smiling wanly)—Probably a case of falling out among rogues.

Rivers—A case with more promising indications than the one in hand. (with a cursory glance at Lita). Miss Juarez (fixing his eyes on the papers he is fingering), my anonymous correspondent requested that you be present during your overseer's testimony. (Lita settles back with startled eyes, darkening face and compressed lips.)

Roger (who has been unmindful of the address to Lita)—You say the prisoner has denied the charge.

Rivers—Of treason, yes (taking a letter from the top of the package, opening and reading): "I swear that I am as innocent of the charge of treason laid upon me as I am ignorant of the grounds for my imprisonment" (laying the sheet unfolded on the table).

Roger (laughing grimly)—A safe oath. Most diplomatic.

Magdalen enters R. with a colored guard. She is costumed as a Red Cross nurse, the number 17 in white being distinctly visible in the large red cross prominent midway of each upper sleeve. She is pale and distinguished by a sorrowful dignity. The twain are not yet visible to the tent occupants.

Rivers (with crisp scorn)—What else could you expect from a woman?

Roger (starting back with a horrified face)—Woman!

Rivers (with an impatient shove of the papers)—Of the Red Cross.

Roger (in pained surprise)—A nurse! Who is——

Magdalen enters the tent unperceived by Roger.

Guard takes position at R. wall of tent, facing front, his gun at his side.

Rivers (fixing a surprised scowl on the prisoner)—Before us.

Magdalen stands a few paces from the table, her position not concealing Lita.

Roger (springing to his feet at sight of Magdalen)—Magdalen! (Rivers turns to Roger in surprise.) My God! (clutching the table for support). General (struggling effectually for self-control), there is some fearful mistake!

Lolita is unnoticed in Roger's intense agitation. Supported by one hand resting on the chest, she leans forward, her eyes fastened on Roger, her lips parted in a smile of triumph which is made more cruel by the disclosed teeth.

Rivers (sharply)— Let us hope so. Calm yourself, Fairfax! Quitas, come forward where you can face the prisoner!

Quitas obeys, taking position a little back of Rivers.

Roger's eyes follow and rest piercingly on Quitas, who shifts his gaze from Magdalen to Lita, who signs to him to settle it on Magdalen.

Magdalen regards her accuser with clear, steadfast eyes.

Rivers—Miss (consulting the letter lying before him) Van Orsdale, the charge of treason is brought against you by this man (indicating him by a curt wave of the hand), who claims to have come upon you in secret conversation with another between 9 and 10 o'clock of the night pre-

ceding the recent battle. (Magdalen gives an almost imperceptible start, her left hand clutching her gown, her eyes falling.) Do you deny being party to such conversation?

Magdalen (stonily, and slowly raising her eyes to meet those of her questioner)—I deny being party to any treasonable plot or to the knowledge of any.

Roger looks at Rivers with a smile of satisfaction.

Lolita, with catlike patience, fixes her cruel smile on Magdalen, who is unconscious of it.

Rivers (sharply, to Quitas)—Repeat what you heard of the conversation.

Quitas—She was talking——

Roger (sternly)—A woman was talking.

Otero enters at back and quietly takes position in the background L. of Roger.

Quitas (nervously)—A woman (doggedly, after a glance at Lita). This is the woman. I know her voice. She was talking to a man. She said: "Not your money. Never fear!" (Magdalen leans forward fixing a desperate look on Quitas, her lips parted with fear, her hands clutching at the bosom of her gown.) "I should die rather than let it be wrung from me" (Magdalen turns mechanically to Roger, who is watching her with a terrified face) "that you betrayed"——. That's all I caught.

Roger (in agonized protest)—Magdalen! For God's sake, General, she is overwrought by hard work and the false charge! I would swear on my life she is innocent!

Quitas—And I swear I've told the truth!

Otero (with a satisfied smile)—I swear it, too! (All turn in surprise, Lita half rising in her astonishment.) I was there—after the man. I thought he was going to meet—someone else, which would have made the meeting of *special* interest to me.

Roger (turning to Otero, his face drawn)—But you were mistaken in the woman's voice.

Otero (shaking his head and smiling disagreeably)—No.

Quitas—I swear to her voice! And at the place where they were standing one of the two dropped this. (holding up the pin).

Roger staggers back, his hand to his eyes.

Magdalen droops her head, and her arms hang limply at her sides.

Lolita settles back in relieved satisfaction, moistening her dry lips, and passing the back of her hand lightly over her eyes.

Otero's attitude is that of a spectator delighted with a tableau arranged for his special benefit.

Rivers looks up pityingly at Roger.

Quitas gazes fixedly at Lita, returning to the nervous clutching and twisting of his hat.

Rivers (to Roger, who is now looking at Magdalen with dazed eyes)—You recognize the pin?

Roger (without taking his eyes from Magdalen)—Yes. (After a short pause, in a voice unnatural and painfully distinct)—It is mine. (falling back slightly and dropping his head).

Lolita (springing to her feet, her eyes wild with fury, her hands clenched at her breast, her teeth set)—Ah!

Otero meets the surprise with soft laughter and turns questioningly toward the door at back.

Rivers has sprung to his feet simultaneously with Lita, and, gripping Roger's arm, fixes a stern, searching glance on him.

Dick, striding forward, looks speechlessly at Roger's averted face.

Cardenas enters at back between two guards, Otero motioning them to halt. They stop just within the door.

Magdalen (recovering first)—General! As there's a God above us, Roger Fairfax is not guilty of treason to his country or to his flag. Whoever believes it believes——

Dick (beyond all restraint)—A damned lie!

Otero (coming to the front and motioning the unnoticed trio forward)—And here (chuckling softly as he waves a hand toward Cardenas) is the proof of it.

Roger steps back toward Lita, who has sunk down on the chest, her wrist to her forehead, her eyes staring blankly.

Cardenas and guards take position in L. background.

Rivers has seated himself, smiling grimly.

Otero takes a position just back of Rivers.

Magdalen (gasping, her voice almost a whisper)—Cajetan Cardenas! (One hand at her throat, the other clenched at her side.)

Roger—At last!

Cardenas glances at Magdalen, smiling familiarly, then shifting his eyes looks fixedly ahead, his manner collected.

Otero—Cardenas, verily. (To Cardenas)—Amigo mio, exonerate (laughing softly) your—*friend*. (looking toward Magdalen, who bows her head). Quitas, you know, didn't catch all of the conversation that night.

Cardenas (without looking at Magdalen)—Whatever conversation Jose Quitas overheard between myself and this—nurse—(Magdalen's head sinks lower)—had nothing to do with treason. I and I alone planned to deliver the Fairfax Roughriders into the trap of the Spanish, whose agent I've been since the war began.

Lolita (leaning forward in agonized surprise)—No!

Roger (in a low, suppressed tone)—You fiend!

Cardenas—I only regret (with an ugly leer at Roger) that the Fairfax dead don't number their Colonel.

Dick (with a snort)—There wont' be no regrets when the Fairfax dead number a traitor! (Going off at back.)

Roger (sadly, his gaze fixed absently on Otero)—I think there must ever be regret that the Fairfax dead must number a traitor.

Cardenas—And not count among them that dog, (pointing to Otero with a venomous glance).

Otero (with a disagreeable laugh)—Well, you see, I confessed on promise of pardon. Pardon's all I get, amigo. That's better business than I did with you. You get both glory and gold. If I hadn't trapped you I'd now be among the stiff and cold. And but for me (with an expressive shrug) your Colonel and your—friend—the nurse (smiling).

Lolita (rising, stung into fury, her whole being trembling with passion)—But for you, Diego Otero, my cousin would not die a traitor's death! (To Roger)—But for you I should not suffer a broken heart. But for you (turning savagely on Magdalen, who recoils), you!—you infamous creature! (Magdalen, with a low moan, covers her face)—you have killed my happiness, and now (snatching a dagger from her bosom) I kill (the dagger flashing high as she springs lithely forward) you!

Cardenas attempts to rush forward, but is held by the guards.

Roger, with a quick movement, tries to stay Lita's upflung arm. The blade falling grazes his right hand, Lita falling against him. Before Roger can free his able arm to hold her Lita springs backward, panting, but still ablaze with fury, the dagger held close.

Magdalen mechanically crosses to Rivers's side, without taking her terrified gaze from Lita.

Quitas, fallen on his knees, crosses himself repeatedly and mumbles apparent supplications.

Rivers (sharply, to the colored guard)—Guard! (the guard wheels with a quick salute) Take (pointing to Lita) that woman!

Lolita, at the advance of the guard, raises the dagger, and with unerring aim, plunges it into her own breast.

Magdalen, with a low cry, turns her face away, and, her back to the audience, leans heavily on her right hand that has sought the table for support.

Guard, arrested by Lolita's act, removes his hat and stands with bowed head.

Lolita (gasping)—No—nigger—lays—his—hands—on—Lolita—Juarez. (trotting forward, Roger catches her, but she slips to the ground. Kneeling beside her he lifts her slightly to support her against him). Roger! (as he gently takes her hand, his face deeply sorrowful)! Roger! (faintly, then with supreme effort) Life—for me—meant—love—from—you. Your—(longer pauses)—love—denied—means—(falling back dead).

CURTAIN.

Act III.

ACT III.

At the Stebbins farm. Late October.

Scene I—The sitting-room of the farmhouse cozily and artistically refurnished, red being the predominant color.

The walls are covered with dainty pictures irregularly hung, several in a space.

Pretty portieres conceal all the doors but that leading into the hall at R.

The heavy curtains of the bay-window are drawn wide apart, revealing a five o'clock tea-table, the window-seat covered with pretty cushions, and the dainty sheer window curtains.

The windows are bright in the glow of the sun just sinking beneath the water. The grass is brown and dead.

A case of books stands between the bay and R. wall. At each side, not against the wall, is a chair.

Between the doors in R. wall is a quaint old table uncovered. In its center is a large lamp, at one side a rose-bowl, and scattered about a few small books.

A little at L. of center of room is a comfortable couch, at its head a handsome silk pillow, across its foot, trailing on the floor, a Persian shawl. A magazine lies near the pillow. Two plain pillows lie on the floor propped against the couch.

Near the head of the couch is a high-backed chair.

At L. of fireplace is a rocker. At upper end the old settle. In front of this a step-ladder.

Over the mantelboard is the lookingglass, its length parallel with the board, its frame partly concealed by sprays of autumn leaves. On the board is a vase of roses and several conspicuous Cuban relics—machetes, strings of Cuban beans, etc. A large photo of Roger in uniform stands at the farther end.

The fire-logs burn brightly in the spacious fireplace.

The old clock still occupies the L. corner of the room. At the rise of the curtain it is on the stroke of 5.

Madge (entering backward through upper door at L.)—Shut your eyes tight. I'll lead you.

Aunt Marthy, her eyes closed, and with both hands tightly held by Madge, is slowly drawn into the room. She is in a tidy black gown, and wears a fresh gingham apron.

Madge is also apron-enveloped, and her sleeves are turned up above the elbow.

Aunt Marthy—Can't I open 'em now?

Madge (laughing, her face radiant)—Just a second, (as they are close the chair at R. of bay) Now! (watching Aunt Marthy eagerly).

Aunt Marthy (after a circling glance, with a little gasp of bewilderment, both hands upheld)—Land alive! An' you an' Magdalen done it!

Madge (motioning toward the window)—And look in here! Isn't it dear! (ecstatically). Don't you like it?

Aunt Marthy (critically)—Thet ain't so bad. (turning to look about the room again). Out here it's kind a-cluttered up, but (with a half sigh) I guess I'll git used to it.

Madge (going swiftly to kneel by Aunt Marthy, and putting impulsive arms about her)—Aunt Marthy, you're a dear to spend so much money for me.

Aunt Marthy (a hand on Madge's head)—I hain't spent no money, child. Magdalen done it all.

Madge (rising quickly and frowning jealously)—So it's Miss Magdalen who's done all this against Roger's coming!

Aunt Marthy (soothingly)—I guess she wants—

Madge (chokingly)—To have things nice for Roger.

Aunt Marthy (smiling)—Don't you?

Madge (unheeding the question and coming nearer Aunt Marthy, her hands clasped)—Aunt Marthy, are you sure he loves me?

Aunt Marthy (shaking her head perplexedly)—Hain't he a-comin' here today to ask ye to hev 'im?

Madge (in a strained voice)—I know. But ever since—since—for days I've been thinking. You know he never expected me to read the letter he left with you unless he died.

Aunt Marthy (considerably nettled)—He can't lay no blame to us fer b'lievin' the papers. He was dead fer three days. An' what's more, ef he hedn't a-been, I wouldn't a-ben drawed into no promise to let 'im hev ye, fer ye would never a-seen the letter.

Madge (tearfully)—Well, you see, the awful part of it is, he had plenty of time to change his mind—about me—between that letter and—and the one you wrote when we found he was alive. Of course, he can't very well do anything now but ask me to—Oh! I—I—(chokingly).

Sarah Ann (shrilly, from without)—Marthy!

Aunt Marthy (rising hurriedly)—He ain't changed his mind. (going to upper L. door). A fool never does. (goes out).

Madge (coming forward to the couch)—And he wrote the letter before—before—he knew about—Cardenas—trying to—take me away. (buries her face in her handkerchief).

A thud without, the result of a fallen stick of wood, prompts Madge to a hasty drying of the eyes, and a speedy feint at arranging the pillows on the couch.

Sarah Ann enters at upper L. door. She has an armful of wood, a small stick in her hand. She looks grimly around.

Sarah Ann (disdainfully, pointing the stick at R. wall)—Why didn't ye tell me ye didn't hev stuff enough to hang them picters even. (looking around at the furniture). A nice mess ye've made of it! (Madge, standing behind the high-backed chair, her hands upon it, hides her face in them). I've got to go to gittin' supper now (going to the settle and raising the lid), an' I hain't no time to put things in place. (laying the wood carefully in the box). There ain't nothin' so heavy but ye could place it yerself, an 'ef ye hed a speck o' pride, ye'd do it before Roger—

Madge (straightening up severely)—Colonel Fairfax!

Sarah Ann (throwing in the rest of the wood, and rising as she slams the lid)—Huh! ye needn't waste no breath Colonel Fairfaxin' me. (Madge sets her teeth, and clutching

the chair with one hand, she pounds it with the other, irregularly and slowly). I've knowed Roger Fairfax sence he was knee-high to a grasshopper, an' I guess ef anybody hez a right to Roger 'im I hev. (turning to take out the step-ladder, she catches sight of the Cuban relics on the mantelboard). Them things from Cuby (Madge gives the chair a shove, goes to the couch, seats herself with her back to Sarah Ann, picks up the magazine, and pretends to read, while she beats a tattoo on the carpet with an angry foot) air nice things to greet a man who's ben nigh kilt by them sneakin' Cubyans. An' you're a fine American to stick 'em up thar. (turning and looking over Madge's shoulder). I hev a little taste ef (with a satisfied grin) I haint smart enough to read a book upside down.

Madge (rising and flinging the book from her, her eyes flashing)—You're making up for lost time today. (going toward lower R. door). You'd better take your temper up to Miss Magdalen (the lower R. door is pushed quickly open) she wants her fire kindled.

Aunt Marthy enters in haste. She is in outdoor attire, her mittens in her hand, but still wearing her apron. Catching sight of Sarah Ann's convulsed face, she stops short.

Sarah Ann (feeling blindly for the ladder)—Ye found-lin'—

Aunt Marthy (nervously)—Land alive! You two haint a-quarrelin' agin! I reckoned ye'd keep peace to-day seein' ez Roger—

Sarah Ann (endeavoring to mimic Madge)—Colonel Fairfax!

Aunt Marthy (laughing good-humoredly as she crosses to the couch to look into the glass)—Jes' so! jes' so! I keep a-fergittin' thet.

Madge, back of Aunt Marthy, but in plain view of Sarah Ann, throws a kiss to the latter with a sweeping curtsey.

Aunt Marthy, in order to settle her bonnet to her taste, lays her mittens on the couch, catching sight of the shawl and pillow.

Aunt Marthy (turning quickly to Madge)—Land alive! Madge Stebbins, the pillar Magdalen give me, an' my Pershy shawl! Ye can't hev 'em out here.

Sarah Ann moistens her lips with satisfaction as she looks malignantly at Madge.

Madge (gruefully)—It's so—I thought nothing too good for Ro—Colonel Fairfax.

Aunt Marthy (taking up the shawl to fold it reverently) —So 'taint! So 'taint. But fust thing I know he may be took with one o' them Cubyan headaches in here, an' ye'll be a-lettin' the campfire run all over everythin'. Here, Sairey Ann, (handing her the shawl and pillow) do you put 'em back in the chimbley-cupboard!

As Aunt Marthy stoops to pick up the pillows from the floor to arrange them stiffly on the couch. Sarah Ann, with the articles held gingerly, makes a stiff curtsey in a ludicrous endeavor to mimic Madge, and throwing a kiss, backs away to upper R. door through which she makes an awkward exit.

Madge sends a black look after her.

Aunt Marthy (with a final pat of her bonnet-tie, and a last survey in the glass)—I guess I'm ready at last. (Madge goes to take a gentle hold of the apron-strings). I must be a-gittin' off (picking up her mittens).

Madge (laughing as she pulls a string)—This apron, yes. Aunt Marthy—Land alive!

Madge (her arms about Aunt Marthy's waist)—I wish I were going with you. Good-by!

Aunt Marthy (as Madge gives her a hasty kiss on the cheek)—What's thet fer?

Magdalen enters upper L. door, in her hands a bunch of red roses. Her entrance is unobserved by the other occupants of the room.

Madge (shyly, looking down)—For the Colonel.

Magdalen, stopping near the window, eyes the scene comprehendingly and coldly.

Aunt Marthy (with embarrassed humor, as she goes quickly toward the lower R. door)—Psho!

Magdalen (smoothly)—Not off yet, Aunt Marthy? (Madge starts to fold up the apron). I'm afraid (going to the table) you'll miss Roger. (Madge's face stiffens).

Aunt Marthy (drawing on her mittens)—Ef the clock's right I won't. Magdalen. Madge! (her hand on the door-knob) ye'd better fly round (looking approvingly at Magdalen who is in simple but elegant attire) an' git yer dress changed. (goes).

Madge (aside, turning jealous eyes on the roses, the stems of which Magdalen is disentangling)—Roger's favorite flower! (to Magdalen) It's nice (sweetly) to have money to get what you want directly you want it, isn't it? Colonel Fairfax loves red roses. We have you to thank for so much. I've just learned that you (with an indicative gesture) made this change.

Magdalen (nonchalantly)—Aunt Marthy might as well have some of the furniture I've had stored away. (looking about somewhat dreamily) It makes a great difference, doesn't it?

Madge (still sweetly)—Yes, indeed. It's a wonder you hadn't thought of it before. But just at this time it's specially nice, and I, for one, am deeply grateful to you. (going off to upper L. door).

Magdalen (looking after her absently)—I'm glad you like it.

Madge (at the door, her grateful expression tinged with triumph)—Yes, for Roger (eyeing Magdalen, who gives a slight start, then puts a thorn-pricked finger to her lips) Roger—and I—can never forget how pretty you (a slight emphasis on the you and a pause) made the room where he comes to ask me (slowly and with drooping head as Magdalen faces her—to be—his wife. (goes).

Magdalen sways back against the table, gripping it fiercely with one hand, the other clutching her gown at the throat, her face drawn and pale, her eyes wild.

Magdalen (hoarsely)—His wife! She lies, lies! His wife! (staggering forward) which means—for me—(tottering she reaches the chair near the couch) God, no! no, no! never! (sinking into the chair, shivering violently, and mechanically chafing her hands, her eyes unseeing, fixed ahead).

Darkness has fallen without.

Sarah Ann (entering upper L. door, lamp in hand, and instantly catching sight of Magdalen)—Magdalen! (Magdalen takes no heed of the anxious voice, and the speaker, placing the lamp on the mantelboard, goes hurriedly to the chair). Magdalen! (relaxing her grimness, softening the usually harsh voice, and placing a protesting hand on Magdalen's shoulder). I told ye (Magdalen sinks back looking

up with a dazed air) not to go to the village. (kneeling to chafe the hands with rough kindliness) Ye haint well 'nuff to take care o' the sick now, an' ye hed no call to stay up all night a-tendin' 'em. Ye've money. Hire 'em cared fer. Ye'll be down sick agin.

Magdalen (struggling to regain her composure and smiling feebly)—No, no! I got chilled.

Sarah Ann (with peremptory kindness)—Ye mus' go to bed right away an' I'll——

Magdalen (wearily and pleadingly)—Leave me here till my room is warm.

Sarah Ann (going)—I'll bring ye some tea an' sunthin' to eat. (Goes out with ladder at upper L. door.)

Magdalen (rising weakly and shivering again)—If the chill of fear, the numbness of despair, might give way to food and warmth! (With uncertain steps she reaches the fireplace, and, resting her hands on the mantelboard, bows her head on them.) Roger! Roger! (Raising her head, one hand falling listlessly at her side, she looks miserably into the fire.) If she has not lied, then you have given your heart to Madge, to Madge, who will never learn your precious worth. While I—(raising her head proudly, her face softened with love'ght, her eyes full of fire)—I could give you a love equal to your own—a love mighty in its growth of fifteen years. (looking suddenly into the glass). Ah! God! It is too old by fifteen years. It is young love you seek—(passionately)—love uncertain, untried—that a breath may kill. (Turning with a start from the glass, her lips parted, her breath coming fast.) Shall I kill it? No, no! (with a half-frenzied laugh), I'll leave that for you to do, Roger. (Shifting her position, her right hand comes in contact with Roger's photograph, which falls to the floor at her feet, face up. Her glance following rests on it.) Roger! (Her hands clasped at her bosom, a contented smile on her lips.) At my feet! (Stopping suddenly she snatches up the picture, and, kneeling close to the couch, her elbows on it, she regards the picture tenderly.) Your dear eyes—they are pleading—begging me—no! no! I shall save you, Roger, save you to-day, now! I shall tell her all and beg her for pity—beg her—(with a harsh, bitter laugh)—her! Madge! (Burying her face in the pillows, the picture beneath her bosom, her arms outstretched across the couch, her hands clenched together.)

Madge enters quietly at lower R. door. She is attired in a simple but fetching gown, and her first glance is into the looking-glass. She looks intently at the reflection with a pleased smile.

Magdalen (with a half-sob, her position unchanged)—Madge!

Madge (starting back, as her eyes rest on Magdalen, her face and voice full of insolence)—Well! (Magdalen, raising her face, cowers back for an instant.) I'm here. (unfeelingly). What do you want?

Magdalen (on one knee, her left hand supporting her on the couch, her fingers tightly clutching the pillow, her face drawn with misery)—You—(gasping)—I——

Madge (coldly)—Ill again! I'll call Sarah. (starting across the room).

Magdalen (struggling to her feet)—No—(imploringly)—no! I want—you. (Madge stops near the chair at C. In rising Magdalen pushes off the pillow, and the photograph

falls to the floor on the farther side of the couch.) I—have —(faintly, as she walks unsteadily around the head of the couch)—a confession—to make.

Madge, after a suspicious glance, has picked up the picture.

Madge (holding out the picture, her whole attitude one of withering scorn)—This (with cutting emphasis) fell from the couch.

Magdalen (trembling and endeavoring to steady herself by the chair)—I—listen! I——

Madge (in scornful fury)—You listen to me! That you love Roger Fairfax, I know.

Magdalen (with a supreme effort, drawing herself up with dignity)—My confession is——

Madge (beside herself with rage)—That he loves you! That he learned to love you in the days gone by, and didn't discover it till you posed as a model of self-sacrifice in a Red Cross gown! That he's coming to-day to tell me this! Oh! (with a wild, mirthless laugh), this (holding out the picture) tells your story well! This picture (setting her teeth and tearing it in two) that, like the original, you've made yours with your kisses (Magdalen starts back, lifting her hand in protest, her lips open) I want no longer! You're welcome to the man that I (throwing the pasteboard at Magdalen's feet) fling at your feet. Don't forget (going toward the table), Magdalen Van Orsdale, that I flung him there! (The lower R. door opens to admit Roger.) You are quite good enough for——

Magdalen (starting forward as the door closes somewhat hastily)—Roger!

Roger stands just within the door in an attitude of calm inquiry. He is in civilian attire, his overcoat unbuttoned, hat and gloves in hand.

Madge (facing abruptly about in position near the table, with a low, mocking bow)—Colonel Fairfax! How very timely! (Roger goes to lay his hat and gloves on the table.) To shorten your suspense—let me inform you now—I cannot marry you!

Roger (sternly, his face dark)—Your reason!

Magdalen turns to Madge with a look of pitiful entreaty.

Madge points a scornful finger at Magdalen.

Magdalen (stonily, as Roger turns to her)—Her birth.

Madge starts violently.

Roger (sternly)—What of it?

Magdalen (with painful slowness)—That she—is—is—(Roger and Madge both lean forward, the former in calm intentness, the latter with bated breath)—the child of—parents who—were—never married!

Roger (falling back)—God!

Madge (springing forward with the fury of a young tigress)—A lie! She is trying to ruin me because she loves you, Roger Fairfax!

Roger (ignoring Madge and leaning heavily against the table)—You (hoarsely) swear it?

Magdalen (with a stony look into space)—I swear it!

Madge (shrilly, with curling lip)—Perhaps *you* know my—father.

Magdalen—I did know him.

Roger (in the calmness of despair)—His name.

Magdalen—Cajetan Cardenas.

Madge (falling back and gasping in intense anguish)—Oh!

Roger (with a dazed, despairing glance at Madge)—A traitor and—my God! Magdalen, no—not that! He knew—he told you—

Magdalen (still stonily, and as if repeating a lesson)—I was with him just before he was shot.

Roger (brokenly)—Her—the mother—is she dead?

Magdalen—No.

Madge again leans forward mechanically.

Roger (with bowed head)—Who is her mother?

Magdalen (raising a haggard, hopeless face)—I am. (She sways forward and falls swooning between Madge and Roger.)

Roger stands transfixed with horror.

Madge shrinks back stunned by the heavy blow.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

Scene 2—Same as preceding. Three weeks later. The ground is white with snow, and the thickly falling flakes allow but a limited view of the sea.

The arrangement of the room is but slightly changed. The couch stands a little farther from the fireplace, in which a bright fire burns. Across the end of the couch is a bright colored afghan.

The high-backed chair is near the fireplace at upper end.

The clock indicates the half after ten.

At rise of curtain Aunt Marthy is discovered in the immediate foreground, seated in the rocker at lower end of fireplace and facing lower R. door. She is employing her leisure knitting.

Aunt Marthy (shaking her head slowly)—An' my house is still a-harborin' the sinful. (Looking up with a bewildered air, and pushing her glasses up on her head.) I've tried to make out I'm a-dreamin' but Magdalen's in thar (indicating lower L. door with a jerky wave of the knitting needle) an' (a short pause) ef I'd a-wanted to I couldn't a-turned 'er outen a sick bed (replacing her glasses on her nose and resuming her knitting). Anyways I reckon I can be ez merciful (with a short, puzzled laugh) ez Sairey Ann. (dropping her knitting in her lap). An' Magdalen's the reason Sairey Ann hain't ben to church these seventeen year! (shaking her head and taking up her knitting).

Sarah Ann enters with her knitting and a letter.

Sarah Ann (handing out the letter and seating herself in the high-backed chair, immediately beginning on a nearly completed stocking)—Adam Neezer was to town an' got the mail. (Aunt Marthy, without attempting to break the

seal, scans the superscription with uncertainty, holding the envelope now close, now at a distance.) It took me quite a spell to git it. He was bound and detarmined to find out whar it come from.

Aunt Marthy (to herself) I hain't sure. (Uncertainly.) It looks like Roger's.

Sarah Ann—He didn't git nothin' outen me. (with lips pinched together with satisfaction). Talk about the curiosity o' women! (seeing Aunt Marthy still studying the envelope). The envelope is open. I thought I'd jes' open it fer ye. (Aunt Marthy takes out the letter.) Feed a man well, Marthy Jane, an' ye can git 'im to do most anythin'.

Aunt Marthy (with a humorous smile while scanning the letter)—Ye know a powerful lot about men, Sairey Ann. (her eyes on the page before her, her face regretful, her voice mingled regret and sternness). Roger's a-comin' day after to-morrow mornin'. (glancing back to the heading). Thet's to-day. (looking up quickly at the clock). What ye goin' to hev fer dinner, Sairey Ann?

Sarah Ann (with a grim smile)—Sunthin' good. Howsomever, I opine ye won't manage Roger, feed er no feed. (knitting jerkily). Did I tell ye Maggie wants ye?

Aunt Marthy (sharply—as she impatiently drops her hands in her lap)—Maggie! I can't fer the life o' me see how ye can be so hard on Madge an' so powerful easy on Magdalen.

Sarah Ann (primly)—Magdalen's Magdalen—

Aunt Marthy (somewhat fiercely)—An' Madge is Maggie!

Sarah Ann (her knitting suspended, an ear bent toward lower L. door)—I guess (with exaggerated gentleness) Magdalen's up. (Snappingly cold, as she rises, folding up her work)—An' Maggie's a good deal o' thet heathenish Cubyan. (dropping the ball which rolls within a few paces of Aunt Marthy).

Aunt Marthy (trembling with anger, and managing after several unsuccessful attempts to replace the letter in the envelope)—Her father. An' give Magdalen *her* right name, too. Mebbe then (Sarah Ann Ann recovers the ball) ye won't fergit thet 'taint Madge's fault the names b'long to 'em. (Sarah Ann, with uplifted head, goes out lower L. door.) Huh! (attempting to knit, her hands trembling). Land alive! Marthy Jane Stebbins, but ye be in a temper! (dropping her hands on the letter in her lap). I wish Roger wa'n't a-comin'. 'Twon't do no good. (sighing). I aim to see my way clear, an' (looking into the fire) I hope I'm a-doin' right. I've prayed an' prayed, though Sairey Ann said she thought 'twa'n't a fit subject to take before the Lord. (Her elbow on her knee, her chin in her hand.) But ef sech things air 'lowed fer—(resting her head in both hands)—Lord fergive me! I dunno what I'm a-sayin'. Do you remember, Lord (Roger, divested of hat and overcoat, enters lower R. door), I ain't accountable, I ain't!

Roger (going across)—Good morning, Aunt Marthy!

Aunt Marthy rises to meet the outstretched hand, her movements still uncertain, and struggling with the intense desire to give a hearty welcome and to maintain an attitude of stern, unwavering decision.

Aunt Martha (coldly)—Good mornin'. (lamely). Ye

hedn't ought to a-come, Roger. (regaining her chair mechanically).

Roger (going to the fireplace to warm his hands)—Not to come home. Aunt Marthy—to the place that's been a dear home to me for twenty years? As many times as I've come to it (looking meditatively across the room) never before have I failed to receive a hearty welcome. (Aunt Marthy knits with flustered fingers.) Perhaps (turning slowly to her) you didn't mean to greet me coldly. When I came in I heard you say you aren't accountable. (taking an envelope from his pocket and handing its contents to her). I hope, Aunt Marthy, you aren't in any way accountable for this letter.

Aunt Marthy (handing the sheet back after a hasty glance)—I guess I be, Roger. (mournfully) I guess I be.

Roger (looking down at the unfolded page)—After three weeks' weary watching of the post, this comes to me. (Aunt Marthy gives a sadly affirmative nod over her work.) Poor child! (looking tenderly at the missive) evidently words failed her. "Dear Roger. Good-bye, Madge" (putting the re-enveloped letter in his pocket and turning to Aunt Marthy). And I've always trusted you to stand my friend.

Aunt Marthy (with unexpected firmness)—I'm a-provin' worthy o' yer trust (knitting fiercely). I'm a-savin' ye from yerself, Roger. Yer word was give to Madge when ye knowed nothin' 'bout her antycedents, an' ye haint the kind thet sneaks outen anythin', reason er no reason.

Roger (slowly and wearily)—You know if I wished Madge to release me I shouldn't hesitate to ask her. I realize only to-day how dearly I love her, bowed beneath this yoke of despair and shame. (walking abstractedly). She can't bear it alone. (coming back to Aunt Marthy). You can't help her. I am perhaps the only one who can. (stopping near the head of the couch). Still you would force aside the support my love can give. (going to chair at R. of fireplace). Have you thought about the end of this? What will you do with Madge (sitting and eyeing Aunt Marthy keenly). What will Madge do with herself?

Aunt Marthy (sighing deeply and shaking her head)—The Lord knows.

Roger (after studying for a moment the seemingly stolid face)—Madge is too young to be tried as she is; too sensitive to face the world alone; and not of a nature to reason it all out calmly with a future of unbroken darkness presented to her. Aunt Marthy (watching her closely), the child's mind may not stand the strain. (Aunt Marthy snaps the knotted yarn.)

Aunt Marthy (in an unyielding tone, though her fingers tremble at their task of splicing the broken thread)—It 'ud be the will o' the Lord, Roger.

Roger (quietly)—That the innocent should suffer for the guilty.

Aunt Marthy (firmly)—The law's written. "The sins of the fathers"——

Roger—A law of man. No merciful God would make such a law.

Aunt Marthy (with a gasp)—Roger!

Roger (fervently)—You aim to be a Christian, Aunt

Marthy, I know. You have pity for the sinner, but you withhold every saving grace from the sinned against.

Aunt Marthy (rising hurriedly and rolling up her knitting)—There ain't no use talkin'. Ye've got to give Madge up, an' ye might ez well take it like a man.

Roger—If I should give Madge up I'd be unworthy the name of man. (As Aunt Marthy goes to lower R. door.) Shall I ask Sarah Ann to tell Madge I'm waiting to see her?

Aunt Marthy (turning abruptly)—I hain't a-goin' to let ye see 'er.

Roger (calmly)—Very well, then, Aunt Marthy (going to her). I'll bid you good-bye now. I shall never come here again.

Aunt Marthy (with a hurt look, slowly)—Never come here agin.

Roger—You couldn't expect it.

Aunt Marthy (after a momentary hesitation)—I'll tell 'er (going hastily to the door), but it won't do no good. (Goes out.)

Roger—Madge, my little girl, when you come what shall I say to you? (Somewhat despairingly.) What that I haven't written? (Magdalen enters lower L door. She is attired in a rich morning gown. Pale and weak from illness, she seeks for support the nearest chair—that near the fireplace. She regards Roger uncertainly.) I must find words to win you over, for I shall never give you up. (Magdalen shivers, turning slightly with a gesture of despair.) Magdalen! (going quickly toward her) this is madness!

Magdalen (trembling but making a decisive step forward)—No. (With Roger's assistance she reaches the couch, where she sinks down, facing the fireplace.) I must speak with you.

Roger (gently but firmly)—Not about Madge. (Going to lower end of fireplace and resting his arm on the mantleboard)—Spare yourself, Magdalen.

Magdalen (looking into the fire)—I want to thank you for the flowers that helped make my illness bearable. They told me (bowing a miserable face) you do not scorn me.

Roger (deprecatingly)—To me you are an esteemed friend of long years standing. That is sufficient for me.

Magdalen—But not for me (looking up with eyes full of pliteous appeal). I would explain to you what—Cajetan Cardenas was—how I——

Roger (with gentle but firm insistence)—I can imagine what Cardenas was.

Magdalen (with sad eagerness, her hands clasped tightly in her lap)—Not what he was eighteen years ago. (looking reminiscently into the fire). He was different then—handsome, daring, fascinating. (Roger seats himself in the rocker) and well liked. He was just Madge's age when I first met him. I was only sixteen With my parents I was visiting on the plantation adjoining his. We saw each other every day. He (with dreamy regretful tenderness) led me into a Paradise(starting as if from a dream, the features drawn, the voice bitterly sad)—then—the same hand that opened its gates for me thrust me outside them where—alone—I looked into the yawning mouth of hell.

Roger—Why recall such scathing bitterness?

Magdalen (unheeding and looking dreamily into the fire)—I prayed for death. It came—for Father. We brought him home—Mother and I. Then we came to Sarah Ann's, where Mother died. So—(the fingers tightening, head and body drooping dejectedly)—my disgrace was my secret and Sarah Ann's.

Roger—And Cardenas——

Magdalen (shuddering)—Never knew. I never heard of him nor saw him again till last summer—the first time when I told him the night before the battle none should ever know he had betrayed—me (shuddering).

Roger—You told him then?

Magdalen (coldly and bitterly)—No.

Roger—In his last moments——

Magdalen—No. Madge was worse than nothing to him.

Roger (sternly, his gaze turned from Magdalen)—Being worse than nothing she escaped. (turning searching eyes on Magdalen's averted face). To you—what is she?

Magdalen (bitterly)—A thorn (strangling a sob and flinging out her left arm, her despairing fingers clutching the couch for support as she sways sideways, head and body bent in dejection) of my own gathering—but still—a thorn. To you (faintly, her right hand clenched on her knee)——

Roger (rising, his face suffused with tender light)—To be she is a beautiful bud—the flower of my life.

Magdalen (still resting on her hand and flinging herself back, her darkened face upturned to Roger, her voice wildly harsh)—A bud whose fresh young beauty blinds you to the thorn she hides—the nature of Cardenas. Ah! (leaning forward and gazing ahead) it will some day pierce you to the heart. (sitting upright and passionately commanding). Give her up!

Roger (looking calmly down into the upturned face)—Never!

Magdalen (sinking on her knees)— With all my heart and soul in the prayer, I implore you to give her up! (Roger lifts her to her feet.) For your own sake, I beg you.

Roger (in measured tones and keeping tight hold of the clasped hands)—Magdalen, you might well go on your knees to plead for your child (Magdalen shudders, her head bowed), not against her. Your heart should know only a woman's tenderest love and pity for this child for which you are so terribly responsible. A man could hardly be capable of greater——

Magdalen—Of greater hatred of his ill-born child. No—(throwing back her head with a wild, harsh laugh) because he'd never willingly own to the responsibility, because if he began to acknowledge such claim—ah, well! I know that I am accountable for the human existence of but one branded soul—a constant living reminder of my folly—no! (bitterly) of her father's (with a laugh of wild scorn) folly and my crime. The girl is mine. (with intense passion). It is my right (with fine sarcasm) to try to prevent her doing harm—above all, when that harm threatens—a friend—(the voice breaking into gentleness)—the best friend a woman ever knew (turning wearily to sink down on the couch facing the fire).

Roger (quickly crossing toward lower R. door, which

opens slightly)—Therefore, your daughter needs me. (The door closing as by a draft, he turns back to Magdalen.) You should wish me godspeed in my struggle to win her for my wife.

Magdalen (without turning, her voice dull and spiritless)—If you will I trust you may quickly forget that your wife is daughter of—a—traitor——

Roger—While I remember only that her mother is a woman who had force enough of character to rise from her fall, to gather together the stained and broken threads of her life, and weave them into the whiteness of days and years unspotted by sin and stamped with a multitude of good deeds. (With a stifled sob Magdalen flings her arms over the head of the couch, burying her face in the pillow.) You (going nearer her) must remember——

Madge enters upper L. door. The fresh roundness is gone from her cheeks and her eyes are dull and deeply ringed. She stops just inside the door as her gaze falls on Magdalen.

Roger—Madge, my darling! (going toward her with outstretched arms).

Madge (pointing coldly to Magdalen's prostrate figure)—You sent for me (Roger's eager steps are arrested) to hear me say I forgive her. (dropping her arm heavily). I cannot.

Magdalen (with a short, sneering laugh, raising her head slightly)—I don't ask it.

Roger (sorrowfully regarding Madge's averted face)—I sent for you to beg you to listen to me.

Madge (with a gesture of weariness)—I received your letters (going nearer the window, pulling back the drapery, leaning her tired head against her uplifted arm, and absently watching the thickly falling snow) is there (without turning around, her tone disinterested) anything you haven't said?

Roger (his hand on the chair at R. of bay)—Yes, the right thing.

Madge (huskily)—Don't look for it! I'm doing the right thing—and—

Roger (passionately)—No, Madge, no! In sending me from you you don't realize what you are doing.

Madge (wearily)—Perhaps not. But—Aunt Marthy must know best, and (turning to throw a sneering glance at Magdalen) even she there on the couch—

Magdalen (with a low, mocking laugh, raising her head to meet Madge's glance) she knows best, too.

Madge (unmoved)—She says I'd be doing a criminal wrong to marry you.

Roger (in a ringing voice, going a few steps nearer Madge)—In accepting my name, my protection and my care, you would put no wrong upon me. While I—I could give you rights instead—hope for despair, joy for sorrow (pathetic longing struggles with the resolve in Madge's face), light for darkness (seeing her emotion, Roger quickly gains her side, taking her half-unwilling hand in both his eager ones). Madge, don't trample on the love that you can make the crown of my life! Don't let your own love, your own heart, deny me!

Madge (faintly, endeavoring successfully to free herself)—For your own sake.

Roger—For my own misery if you persist in sending me from you. Madge, dear heart! (laying a hand tenderly on

her shoulder) isn't your faith, your trust, in me strong enough to teach you I couldn't wish you to do a wrong?

Magdalen (in anguish)—Oh! God!

Roger (putting his hand under Madge's chin and gently raising her face)—Look at me! (the eyes still droop). Aren't you sure of your love for me, dear?

Madge (turning impetuously, passionately, toward him to lay her hands on his shoulders, her eyes also speaking for her heart)—So sure of it, Roger—Roger—that if you leave me I shall die! Oh! (falling back a little, her hands clasped tightly to her breast) I—can't—(Aunt Marthy enters lower R. door, and meeting her glance Madge flings herself back with a low, bitter cry)—I can't—(harshly) no! I must—not—forget I can no longer boast a name—(with a discordant laugh, a sneer on her lips)—not even Stebbins.

Roger (quietly)—I have offered you Fairfax.

Madge (chokingly)—To drag in the mire. No! (Aunt Marthy crosses to the table where she stands with bowed head). No! we must say good-by.

Magdalen (slowly rising to a sitting position)—Ah! (with intense relief).

Madge (with a look of bitter hatred, her voice thick with it)—Yes, I know, you—you who have cursed me—(Magdalen shivering, buries her face again) are more than satisfied. (turning to hold out both her hands to Roger) Good-by! God—if there is a God who will hear the prayer of one like me—God bless you! (with piteous entreaty mingled with command) Go!

Roger (tightly holding her hands and fixing clear, determined eyes on her face)—I must obey your command, my little girl, but it is good-by only for a little while. I have not given you up. (gently touching her forehead with his lips he turns to go).

Madge (moaning and hiding her face in the drapery)—It is good-by forever.

As Roger passes Aunt Marthy he stops, regarding her reproachfully for a second, then she making no sign he goes to the hall-door, turning to send a tender, loving glance to Madge.

Aunt Marthy (as Roger reaches the door)—Roger! (He turns hestitatingly). Don't go yit! (Madge turns about, sending her a bewildered glance). I'm all in the dark yit (shakily). But I've arrove to the conclusion thet in this like other dark places ye've got to go accordin' to yer feelin'. (Madge comes slowly and mechanically forward) My feelin' is, Madge, we might ez well give in, fer Roger aint a-goin' to.

Roger (half-incredulous)—Aunt Marthy! (taking her hand)

Aunt Marthy—I mean it!

Roger (after pressing fervent lips to Aunt Marthy's hand)—Madge, you'll come to me now, dear?

Madge turns uncertainly toward Aunt Marthy.

Aunt Marthy (much flustered and eager to get away)—I guess ye'd better. (to Madge's questioning look). Take 'er! (to Roger, as she goes hurriedly out lower R. door).

Roger (taking Madge in his arms and tenderly stroking her hair)—And you dared to stand out against me!

Madge (with a sob, her face hidden)—It was Aunt Marthy—

Roger—God bless her kind heart!

Madge (turning towards the couch, her face darkening with hatred)—And she—

Roger (with self-reproach at his forgetfulness)—Magdalen! (going to the couch) Forgive me! (laying his hand on Magdalen's head) Magdalen, dear friend! (his fingers touching her face, he starts, turning the head slightly. At the note of fear in his voice, Madge is drawn slowly toward him). My God! (falling back) Dead! (reaching out his arms to Madge, who clings close to him) Dead!

CURTAIN.

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